SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1978 NUMBER 27

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

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Interviews: ***BEN BOVA***
STEPHEN FABIAN

WHY BOVA'S LEAVING ANALOG / THE GALAXY MESS / SHOULD WRITERS BE SERFS...OR SLAVES?

HARLAN ELLISON - MARTA RANDALL - GEORGE R.R. MARTIN - POUL ANDERSON - MICHAEL MOORCOCK

ONE IMMORTAL MAN

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

Formerly THE ALIEN CRITIC

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8-9-78 Final entry. After this I correct a few of the typos I've managed to spot and add page numbers. Tomorrow this issue goes to the printer (who called a week ago to assure me they had enough paper stockpiled to print SFR. There is a paper mill workers' strike on the west coast, by the way...).

Klaus Boschen, a NY subscriber, sent me a NY TIMES clip a few days ago, dated 13 July, 1978, of some interest and importance. It seems that NOVA, due in September from the publishers of PENTHOUSE, is now officially named-changed to OMNI.

The change from NOVA, of course, is due to the WGBH-TV suit over the title, since they have, they feel, prior rights to the word/title in their NOVA science show on Public TV.

Penthouse made a quick title search and concluded that OMNI wasn't nailed down and fitted their needs, and so made the change. The new OMNI logo will use the same modernistic type style/design as their NOVA, and all else about the magazine will presumably be as scheduled.

NOTE TO REVIEWERS: Make them short and to the point. I'd rather buy many shorties than a few longies.

Next Issue.....

WILL PROBABLY BE MADE OF THE FOLLOWING:

AN INTERVIEW WITH TERRY CARR

"BEYOND GENOCIDE" BY DAMON KNIGHT

THE CONCLUSION OF ONE IMMORTAL MAN

AN EXPANDED "OTHER VOICES"

"THE VIVISECTOR" BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

SMALL PRESS NOTES

"THE HUMAN HOTLINE" BY ELTON ELLIOTT

"SPROCKET TO ME!!!" BY BILL WARREN

"JOHNNY WIRECUTTER", A POEM BY NEAL WILGUS

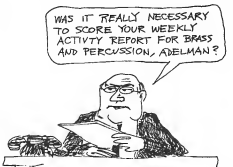
ALIEN THOUGHTS (OF COURSE)

AND POSSIBLY:

"OCCASIONALLY MENTIONING SCIENCE FICTION" BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN BRUNNER

AS WELL AS SOMETHING NOT IN-HAND WHICH I FEEL MUST APPEAR.



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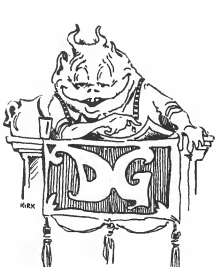
ALIEN THOUGHTS



BY THE EDITOR

Two major items were left over from SFR #26----a letter from Rene Anderson which was too long for what little room I had left at the time, and a letter from Harlan Ellison responding to a letter I sent which was inspired by the editorial which appears below.

6-7-78 Is a puzzlement. In the Spring 1978 ALGOL, Harlan Ellison allowed to be published his famous resignation speech from the Science Fiction Writers of America. The speech was given in April of 1977.

For publication in ALGOL the speech was 'Specially Expanded and Corrected'.
The last paragraph of the printed speech is as follows:

'My resignation will be in the mail, and I will expect a refund on the balance of my dues. This is the last time I will attend an SFWA function. I don't want the stench of failure on my expensive clothes.'

Pow. Right between the eyes. Harlan reviled and insulted SFWA up one side and down the other.

Then, the July 1977 F&SF was a special Harlan Ellison issue, in which appeared Harlan's story, "Jeffty Is Five."

Subsequently, I learned that "Jeffty is Five" had been nominated for the SFWA Nebula Award!

How could this be, if Harlan was no longer a member of SFWA? Had he changed his mind and NOT resigned? Did he forget?

Now, in the April 1978 issue of LOCUS I read that "Jeffty Is Five" won the Best Short Story Nebula Award! The story says:

'Harlan Ellison, who had not been at the banquet, appeared suddenly to accept his short story Nebula.'

So there it stands, a mystery. Is SFWA honoring non-SFWA-written stories, now?

I am not privy to SFWA publications and have not a pipeline into their secret deliberations. I quit several years ago by not renewing my membership.

I keep thinking...if Harlan had not in fact resigned, wouldn't he have noted that fact in a footnote to the speech when it was published in 1978?

So I stew....and, baffled, write this little commentary.

What, write Harlan or SFWA and ask a simple question? That's no fun!

LETTER FROM HARLAN ELLISON

14 June 78

'You ask some questions and as I assume you'll make mention somewhere in SFR of this tiny matter, I undertake to answer briefly, as follows:

'How "Jeffty is Five" was nominated is quite simple. An author need not be a member of SFWA to have a story nominated. It's happened many times in the past with writers as diverse as E.L. Doctorow, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Frederik Pohl (when he'd resigned), Harry Harrison (when he'd resigned), Philip K. Dick, Robert Coover, Italo Calvino, Ian Watson, Jorge Luis Borges and many, many others. I cannot remember an occasion, however, when a non-member won in fact.

'That the story actually won, after I'd resigned with such anger and public defamation of the organization, forms the basis of my acceptance of the Nebula.

'I was tipped that the story had won, and won in a runaway, just a few days before the banquet. I had not planned on going to get the trophy. I was going to have Silverberg pick up the physical award and say some pleasant words. But several members of SFWA who were planning to be there suggested that the organization's overcoming their animosity to pick the story was both a compliment to the work itself, and an indication that the membership was able to overcome its personal feelings about me to select a story they felt was the best. I agreed.

'My friend, Eileen Healy, and I, planned a day in San Francisco. I did not attend either the Nebula Day programming or the Nebula banquet. No one knew I was in town. Fifteen minutes before the awards were scheduled to be handed out, I received a phone call in my hotel, and Eileen and I walked over to the Sir Francis Drake. As I walked in through the darkened reception room, Fred Pohl was naming the short story winner. As he said, "Accepting for Harlan Ellison will be..." I walked in and said, "I'll take it, Fred." Then I made a few brief remarks thanking SFWA for honoring my work, sat down, and left immediately after the rest of the awards were given.

'While my feelings about SFWA have not changed since I resigned -- and I must confess that a year without the sturm und drang of SFWA politics has been heavenly -- it would have been unconscionably rude to turn away with surliness from the high courtesy demonstrated by the organization. I chose to go to the hotel and accept in good grace. While I cannot argue that technically I did "attend", my "attendance" was -- at least in my mind -- so minimal as to serve the demands of gracious behavior, indicating my thanks for SFWA's uncommon fairness, without straining too hard my resolve never again to be a part of SFWA doings.

'It may well be minimally inconsistent, but though you raise the question -- as many who enjoy picking nits in my behavior will raise the question -- a matter of something less than world-shaking importance wot -- I decided to be inconsistent and suffer the silly fan nit-picking (which, if not on this matter, would surely manifest itself on some other) in order to pay respects where due.

'That it should even occur to you, or anyone, to ask me how and why -- when we both bloody well know how and why -- disingenuousness does not suit you, Richard -- does not escape my understanding: I am easy to rile, but I should think serious people would have more serious things to do with their lives. One more reason, one more example, one more occasion to turn me even more sourly against sf fans and fanzine publishers than all these past years of time-wasting silliness have soured me.

'And yet, there is seeming lack of understanding as to why I can be so mean towards fandom. Good old

fandom. Sweet, kindly, camaraderie-filled fandom.

'I hope this explanation has served its purpose beyond getting in a short jab at my work-day. '

I responded with a short letter ---something with instant, long-distance psychoanalysis [which I condemn in others] having to do with the suggestion that in Transactional Analysis terms he might be playing a Game with fandom...a love/hate relationship...part of a life script...

Harlan called me. He was very sure that I was wrong. There was a sad, almost plaintive tone to his words... He wants to have nothing more to do with fans or fandom after his current fan covention commitments are completed. He said he was tired of fans using him.

There is truth in that. We do use Harlan. He's good copy. He's a draw. But he must get something out of it---some pay-off---or he wouldn't let us do it.

However, he makes a good point: judge his work, not him. review his stories, not his personal life.

Let's try to do that.

And now on to the long, potent letter that needs publishing and commentary:

LETTER FROM RENE W. ANDERSON

May 30, 1978

'One of several pieces that caught my eye in SFR #25 was the one on page 19 concerning WINDHAVEN, the Matriarchal Fanzine (whatever the hell that's supposed to mean!) and I see where you make mention of an article in issue #3 by Charles Saunders, "Why Blacks Don't Read Science Fiction".

'Curiosity prompted me to send for that issue of the magazine, but I have not received it yet, so I do not know what Mr. Saunders had to say or where he got his erroneous information. My first thought when I saw that was, "What the hell? I'm Black and I read sf. I have for at least 20 years. Love it, write it, too. Know a whole crowd of Black folks that feel that same way. So what kind of shit is this?"

'However, the proper thing is to read Mr. Saunders' article first, then make my reply directly to him at WINDHAVEN (sounds like an old folk's home). Still, the title of his article alone brought several assorted comments to mind and I mulled over them as I flipped ahead to read the first installment of ONE IMMORTAL MAN.

'When I had finished that, I was struck by the thought that that kind of thing is one of the reasons why a lot of Black people I know do not read much science fiction, Dick.

'Personally, I find the premise of the story intriguing and uniquely different from a lot of the stuff that's been coming out in recent years. But, although you call it science fiction instead of fantasy, I'm wondering just what the hell the point is. I certainly hope you do not get the wrong idea, but, intellectually, I must seriously question the motivation that led you to create a protagonist who was originally white (I suppose) somehow became immortal and came to be revered as a god by the leftover white folks who had gone ape, then managed to turn himself into a stereotypic, savage, ruthless, cock-strong Super-Nigger! COME ON NOW!

'I certainly wouldn't want to start a surge of Black-Whatever in the field of sf, but I am amused, upset, and maybe even a little angered by this sudden wave of "Blackness" in sf. What is it? Spider Robinson's "Isham" in TELEMPATH, Bob Silverberg's "Shadrach" in SHADRACH IN THE FURNACE, your Vik (although I'd call him a nigger by default), the little boy, David, in what I refuse to glorify by calling it a story, "David's Friend, the Hole", in the July issue of FANTASTIC STORIES. That is the worst piece of insulting shit I've seen published in a long time. But I'll come back to that later.

'The point is, which is shared even by my friends who are deeply into sf, that all the Blacks in the stories either act the way whites think Blacks are supposed to act or they are whites' projection of the way they HOPE we will act in the future.

'This field is not the only one to suffer from such blind spots; all of literature suffers, as well. There are very few whites who can write about Blacks and have them come across realistically. One who can that comes to mind is Harlan Ellison, and I'm thinking of his story "Daniel White for the Greater Good". There was, and still is, a lot of truth in that story, perhaps more than even he knows.

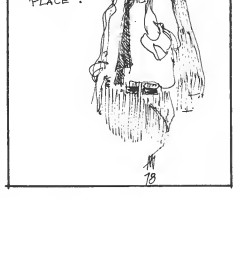
'However, such a thing is a rarity in contemporary literature. Usually, we're stuck with things of the DRUM and MANDINGO ilk, which I happened to enjoy along with all the other FALCONHURST books; or pure bullshit a la SHAFT and SUPERFLY.

'Let's hope I don't start something when I say that it is far easier for a Black to act white than vice versa. And although my personal background and temperament has put me somewhat outside the mainstream of Black life, I most certainly know what it's about. "Blackness" is something we're born with that goes much deeper than pigmentation. You can't learn it and you can't fake it. And even though some of the imitations are pretty damn' convincing, it just "ain't the real thing".

'No matter how much sophistication or education we accumulate, there is a way we have of moving in the world, a way of reacting to our surroundings, a way of responding to situations that has so much more to it than can be conveyed by one who does not know it inherently. There is something that is very evident in our personalities that is--us. Blackness isn't a color so much as a way of being, an experience.

'The characters in good sf should be like the characters in any other viable literary form, solidly believable and realistic without being overly-patronizing or pretentious. Isham and Jordan came the closest to that of any Black characters I have yet seen in contemporary sf, but even they (or Spider) let the inconsistency show through at times. Story-wise, TELEMPATH and Silverberg's SHADRACH...were very good and I enjoyed reading them, but, after a while, I had to keep reminding myself that these guys were supposed to be Black.

'For those who would say that these characterizations are merely the logical extrapolation of current trends toward equality and total integration, I must find fault with that premise. We've come a long way



in the last three or four hundred years, but our basic Blackness, even in the most cosmopolitan of us, has not changed all that much. What makes anybody think it's going to change that drastically in the next three or four hundred years? In fact, it just might well grow more intense. It's one of the few ways we have of retaining some parts of our racial and personal identities.

'And as for the supposed paucity of Black sf readers/writers/fans, well, that may have been so ten or fifteen years ago...it certainly was so when I started reading the stuff. But it is definitely not so now. In fact, I have a friend who is a Larry Niven freak and probably knows as much about "Known Space" and the Kzinti as he does. Another is a nut for epic poems after the manner of "Beowulf", etc., and she is currently writing an sf/fantasy story in the form of an epic poem. Five or six of the members of the small local fan group of which I am a member, the Dune Children, are Black and I have been approached by other Blacks who are interested in joining the group.

'Personally, I cut my sf-reading "teeth", so to speak, on Asimov's FOUNDATION TRILOGY and Van Vogt's SLAN and THE WORLDS OF NULL-A. I've got a healthy collection of ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION which I have jealously saved and guarded over the years, I had read Tolkein long before he became fashionable, and I discovered H.P. Lovecraft in an ancient issue of WEIRD TALES I'd found at a garage sale one summer afternoon when I was about 15. I won't run on about it here, but I can truthfully say that if it has to do with science fiction or fantasy, I probably have it or know where to find it--if it's to be found. I subscribe to all the pro-zines, most of the semi-pros, and a few of the better fanzines, all of which I freely share with a couple dozen other Blacks who don't read science fiction. We do, it's just that we're more quiet about it than the rest of you. (They're quiet, not me.)

'Also, it's been my experience to meet more whites who don't like sf than I have Blacks. Why it's like that, I cannot say. Maybe somebody knows the reason for that strange quirk. One thing that does surprise me, though, is the evidence I've seen, at least locally, of a rather sizeable increase in Black interest in sf with the coming of STAR WARS.

'Now, I'm not about to join the current fray over whether or not it is sf (it isn't), or whether or not it was a good movie (it was). But I find it a bit strange that younger persons who did not have the pleasure of going to Saturday matinees to find out what the evil Ming had in store for Flash Gordon that week and so cannot make the obvious connections have flocked to it in droves and have fallen in love with it. The best part of a lot of those droves happen to be Black. I've seen them all the times I've gone back to see the movie. And their reasons for liking the thing are as many and varied as their personalities. (Although it may say something about Black temperament that the majority of those I've asked just LOVE the character of Darth Vader.)

'However, the offshoot of this is that Blacks are going out and actually buying other sf in the bookstores and a lot of my friends who formerly didn't care about sf one way or the other are now asking me to recommend some good sf to read. I refer them to different authors according to their tastes.

'If they want to read a technical journal, I tell them about Joe Haldeman, if they want to be royally entertained, I send them in search of Roger Zelazny, and if they want a little of both, I give them Niven and Pournelle or Asimov or else one of the better anthologies.

'This is going on in Pittsburgh; I can't speak for other places, but I would suppose it would hold true for them too. And, hopefully, this new interest will generate an increase in Black sf writers. Maybe I've missed something, but I don't know of any current Black sf writers. If they're our there, they are being very quiet about it. And if that's so, I wonder why.

'After I've read Mr. Saunders' article, I may have more to say on the subject. And as for Black characters in sf stories...well, I think I've made my point. If you want to know how not to write an sf or fantasy story, take a peep at that bullshit in July FANTASTIC. Talk about stereotypes! I really thought people would have better sense than that by now; but whoever this Grania Davis thinks she is, she (?) needs to go back and come again. And, yeah, damn right, I was insulted by that thing she'd written and that Ted White saw fit to publish.

'The plot stinks to high heaven of racism whichever way you cut it. The young white broad gets her virginity ripped off by a Black stud and she ends up very pregnant in her comfortable white, middle-class home with her very humane and understanding white parents (no way, Baby). She has her kid and keeps him and the kid grows up in a mixed neighborhood, mind you, and doesn't know anything about being Black! What kind of horse shit is that?

'So Ms. Davis writes, David did not like soul music, didn't like soul food, because his white momma and grandparents didn't cook any and inside, he FELT white!! Jeesus, that story (?) makes me mad just sitting here thinking about it! And after awhile, everybody begins to think David is bonkers because he's found a friend in the hole and they want to send him away to the looney bin. David chooses his hole over his family (I don't blame him) and decides to go there to stay. He hits Happy Land just as the bulldozer hits him and nobody's really sorry because, after all, he was only the white broad's trick baby, anyway and what respectable family would have wanted him around if they could help it??? Ms. Davis, whoever and whatever you are: There is something really wrong with your head. And I would suggest that you get it fixed. Quick!!

'That's all for now, Dick. I have more to say about some other things in SFR #25, but I'll get to them in a few. One concerned Larry Niven's reference to Jungian archtypes--that's my professional specialty--analytical psychology, and the archtype Kate meant in her story was possibly the "Trickster"; there is no "Hounds" archtype, as such. Read over Volume 9 of Jung's Collected Works. It'll clarify the entire issue.

'Take it cool and stay loose.'

((I can't speak for any other writer who may use a black character in fiction. And I can only point out that Vck in ONE IMMORTAL MAN is not a

black man. He is a world-weary man who is into sex and danger to keep himself interested in life. You don't seem to care or note that he's not much of a white man, either, since he advocates slaughtering the invading white savages.

((I'm not into writing relevant sf, Kema. My characters I hope act like most men would given those circumstances and given what I feel to be basic human instincts and personalities.

((I am, on the margin, making a statement about governments and people in MAN, but if I use racism it won't be because I'm a racist.

((You're right, of course, that a white person can't really know what it's like to be black. When you're sensitized to a personal reality you tend to interpret event and readings in those terms... Thus I often (who am slightly handicapped) am positive you Normals have no idea what it's like to live in the private hell that can be the life of a handicapped person.))

((I don't write Handicapped Writer stories and don't make my major characters Handicapped People. And I do not think a black writer should be a Black Writer. Nor do I think there should be (though there are) Women Writers. Before you know it there'll be a Black, Jewish, Gay, Woman, Handicapped, Poor, Southern Writer....

((I understand Samuel R. Delany is black. Thank God he doesn't think it's important enough to become a Black SF Writer. There's no way to tell he's black from his fiction, and that's the way it should be.))

7-2-78 Since Ben Bova is no longer editor of ANALOG (having resigned a few weeks ago over reported 'policy differences' with the Conde-Nast powers-that-be) I've decided to use the interview with him in this issue, and to try for some first-hand information on the matter.

The resignation of J.J. Pierce as editor of GALAXY raises questions such as: will GALAXY continue? The ownership is still into a hand-to-mouth financial situation (the typesetter won't release the issues until paid, the printer won't release the issues until paid...and it appears that writers won't get paid until they sue).

J.J. is scheduled to leave August 1st. There is no word yet on who will replace him.

Well, I guess I'll write a letter and ask. That's what you pay me for, right?

Word is, also, that Diana King is out as editor of the new PENTHOUSE science/fact magazine, NOVA. She had been active in recruiting Name sf authors for the magazine, but that situation is also up in the air because----WGBH, the Boston TV station, who originated and air the science program NOVA, have hired copyright lawyers and it is their intention (as per the NEW SCIENTIST

LETTER FROM ARNOLD E. ABRAMSON

UNIVERSAL PUBLISHING & DISTRIBUTING CORP.
720 White Plains Road
Eastchester (Scarsdale PO), N.Y.10583

July 19, 1978

'I'll answer your letter in the order of your questions.

'1) GALAXY will continue. For a temporary period the frequency may be bi-monthly.

'2) Five or six people have applied for the editorial job and we have not yet made a decision but Pierce is leaving us in a good enough shape to be ahead editorially so that we don't have to act until we are ready.

'3) The long-time situation concerning the arrearages to writers is this: When we first attacked the problem about a year and a half ago, we were in arrears to writers in the amount of approximately $40,000. We reduced that to $11,000 and then sales and cash flow slipped again, pushing the arrears back to $20,000, $18,000 of which was owed to writers and $2,000 to another publisher. These amounts include the issue just closed but not yet published. In the last two weeks we've paid writers a little over $3,000 in arrearages and so now the net we owe writers is about $15,000.

'Difficulties notwithstanding, it always has been and remains our intention to pay the writers in full. We are moving to work out of our difficulties corporately and there may be some word on this in the next sixty days.

'I appreciate very much your action in contacting me directly.'

of 18 May, 1978) to seek a restraining order stopping Guccione (publisher) from using the name NOVA.

Considering the evidence of Dianna King's non-existence as editor, now, perhaps NOVA-the-magazine is on Hold for a while.

But there has been expensive advertising placed promoting NOVA. The just-received July issue of PSYCHOLOGY TODAY has a luxurious two-page spread in full color showing the first issue's cover and some full-color interiors. This advertising was placed months ago, of course.

The cover price for NOVA is $2.00. It has a "modern" logo, an intriguing, non-sf cover painting (a distant vehicle at dusk, following what looks to be a picket fence) in blues and purples, and featured contributors: Science Fiction:Isaac Asimov, F. M. Busby, Ray Bradbury, and L. Sprague de Camp; An interview with Jacques Cousteau; U.F.O. Update; Clones; Microphotography;and The Nature of Genius.

The issue is dated October, 1978 and it is billed as a Collector's Edition. They want $18.00 for a 12 issue subscription.

From the ad I get the impression that NOVA will be a high-powered version of VERTEX with an emphasis on science---speculative science ---over science fiction and science fantasy.

7-4-78 Happy 202nd birthday, America. The next ten years will be very rough for you.

The post office gave me a new shock last week, as the clerks, on three different occasions, handed me, gleefully, a printed sheet showing a new, higher rate structure for fourth class--book rate.

You might be interested in a little history of postal rates for the last few years. Starting with 1975:

Class	1st oz.	2nd oz.	first lb.
1st	10¢	19¢	
2nd		8¢	
3rd		10¢	
4th			20¢
1976			
1st	13¢	24¢	
2nd.		10¢	
3rd		13¢	
4th			21¢
1977			
4th.			30¢
1978 May 29			
1st	15¢	28¢	
2nd		10¢	
3rd		20¢	
4th			36¢
1978 July 6			
4th			48¢

For those fans and book publishers who mail at single-piece 4th class book rates, the last few years have been a disaster. While those who mail at second class transient

CONTINUED ON P.19

AN INTERVIEW WITH BEN BOVA

Conducted By Elton T. Elliott

SFR: Could you describe your basic working day as Editor of ANALOG?

BOVA: That starts sometimes between 7:00 and 8:00 in the morning. I get into the office and start reading manuscripts and answering letters, and I'm in the office Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday most weeks. I'll stay there until about ten in the morning, other people start coming in, the phone begins to ring, the rest of the publishing world wakes up, and the quiet work, the reading work, the work you do by yourself, is more or less over.

Then it's meeting with people, answering questions, making decisions. Lots of writers and illustrators come in and out of the office, fans wander in from all over the world.

We had a lovely couple one afternoon, just wandered into the building, completely unannounced, came into the office. They had just retired, they lived in Johannesburg all their lives, in South Africa, they have read ANALOG for 15 years or so, and for their retirement, they've given themselves a trip around the world, and one of the places they wanted to see was the office of ANALOG.

SFR: When do you get a chance to write?

BOVA: You make the time to write and my writing routine is the four days of the week when I am not in the office. I'm up the first thing in the morning, and working generally until about noon, sometimes a little later. But usually by early in the afternoon, I'm finished at the typewriter. I just run out of gas as far as writing is concerned and then I clean up the work that I didn't finish in the office.

There are still lots of manuscripts to be read, sometimes correspondence to be answered, and I'll take that stuff with me Thursday night from the office to home and Tuesday morning bring it into the office again to complete it.

SFR: Do you often get a chance to make a trip like this? (To Oregon)

BOVA: Not too often, because the work that I leave behind me in New York just piles up. The longer I stay away the worse it is when I get back, so you're really chained to the office to quite an extent.

SFR: Describe or generalize how you work, say, with a specific author.

BOVA: There is no basic generalization. It is different for each person. Some of the writers who have just come out of the slush pile, brand-new writers, we correspond, perhaps. Take Hayford Pierce, for example. He is living in Tahiti, and I got a couple of stories from him. In fact, the first story I got from him was really very good, and I published it.

We corresponded back and forth and I noticed that the mail from Tahiti was coming in faster than the mail from New Jersey. I mentioned this in a letter and suddenly Hayford turned it into a Science Fiction story. This is the origin of the Chip Foey Riders series.

Incidentally, Chip Foey Riders, nobody seems to have noticed, is an anagram of Hayford Pierce. Write that in SFR, a First.

SFR: How do you work with artists? You mentioned that you fractured a rule when you accepted art from Alex Schomburg. Will you explain how you basically work with artists and how Schomburg is different?

BOVA: It has been impossible, in almost every case, to deal with artists who cannot get into the office for face-to-face discussions of the work with me and with the Art Director, and in the case of the cover art, with our Circulation Manager.

Our usual routine, is when I buy a manuscript, I get a picture in my mind of the artist who would be best suited to illustrate that particular story. Sometimes that artist is not available and I have to get someone else. But we call the artist in, I give him the manuscript, we discuss the story in general terms, I want him to read it, and then, very often, the artist will phone me back after reading the story, with some ideas of the scenes he wants to illustrate. Then, he'll do, if it's the black-and-white interior stuff, he'll do the illustrations and bring them in, and the Art Director and I will look at them. If we have any qualms about them or if we want any changes made, we discuss it right there with the artist. If we've got the picture to the point so we can say, now, we want this over there or this figure looks a little weak -- if you try to do this through the mails or over the phone, it is literally impossible.

How was Mr. Schomburg able to get around this?

Alex sent in a couple of sketches and said if you like them I'll do a painting completely on speculation and if you don't like the finished job, then no harm done. We liked a couple of the sketches very much, made some changes, suggested some changes on the sketches; we put an overlay on the sketches, said, 'move this here', 'make this stronger', etcetera, etcetera. He took the suggestions quite well, and we talked back and forth on the phone a couple of times, and he sent in the painting, and it was exactly

what we wanted. He did a marvelous job.

It's very, very rarely that an artist who is working on many different assignments, can afford to do a whole painting completely on speculation. He wants some commitment by the publisher, and it is good for the artist to be able to see the Art Director and the Editor and get the ideas squared away.

It would seem that you would have to be a seasoned professional. For instance, Schomburg has forty or fifty years in the business.

Well, we have very young artists working with us, newcomers to the field, too. We tend to go with the more experienced people on the covers, because painting an ANALOG cover is really a very specialized thing. It's not merely a matter of illustrating the story. Frequently the cover paintings will not illustrate the story as exactly as the interior illustrations do. Because the cover is aimed at selling the magazine. The cover has got to reach out to a passerby as he goes past the newsstand and grab him and drag him to the newsstand and make him pick up the magazine and look into it. So it's got to be bold, it's got to be dramatic, and it must instantly be recognized as a piece of fine technology that the viewer has never seen before. In years past, we have used photographs, we have done paintings of massive rockets -- they don't sell very well at all. Our readers are looking for high technology that they cannot see anywhere else in the world.

SFR: Would you describe your new ANALOG book concept?

BOVA: The first two will be an ANALOG Yearbook, which is essentially a thirteenth issue of the magazine. The second will be a collection of classic stories from ASTOUNDING called THE BEST OF ASTOUNDING and Alex Schomburg has done the cover for that. Again, by sending in a complete painting and saying if you like it, fine, and if not, don't worry about it, doing it on speculation.

SFR: You mentioned in the March, 1976 editorial, that there might be some new forms that you can do in the ANALOG book format that you couldn't do, say, in ANALOG magazine. Would this include more emphasis on sex or violence?

BOVA: Not particularly. But I think that the readers of ANALOG magazine have a very, very strong idea of what they think the content of ANALOG should be. They change their tastes rather slowly. They would not like, for example, to see fantasy stories in ANALOG. They've made that very, very clear. And yet they do read fantasy, some of them do, and many of them remember very fondly, the old Street and Smith magazine, UNKNOWN, which used to be a companion magazine to ASTOUNDING, and have asked for a revival of UNKNOWN. We are going to try to do that as a book, because you can do a book as a one-shot. You're not committed to do a continuing magazine, and you can test the market that way. If enough people buy UNKNOWN WORLDS as a book, maybe we'll do two books in the same year, tales of the unknown, mixing new material with the reprints from the old magazine. And perhaps, if it goes well enough, we'll eventually do the books on a quarterly basis or maybe even more often, if we build up an audience.

SFR: What of ANALOG records?

BOVA: That's in abeyance right now. The interest has shifted from records to a radio series. We feel that there is no point in going forward with the record deal unless we get a national distributor. As we looked into that, it occurred to us that an even more interesting possibility would be to do a national radio show. Once that gets started, if we can indeed do it, would automatically, I think, give us a national distribution for the records. We would do radio shows and offer recordings of them.

SFR: These would be basically old classics, right?

BOVA: I think some of new classics, too. I'd like -- I don't like to lock these things into the old backward-looking stuff. We did "Nightfall" because it is one of the best stories ever done in the genre. It was selected by the SFWA members as the most popular short story ever done in science fiction. It had Asimov's name on it, which is always good box-office, plus it lends itself to good dramatization.

SFR: Also you are now a judge of Dial Press, James Wade Books.

BOVA: No, I'm not. I dropped that. Isaac Asimov and I were sort of honorary judges for the beginning of that series. But once they got under way, I dropped out of that.

SFR: Did you have your say in, for instance, the selection of the first novel?

BOVA: We didn't have much disagreement, so there was never a tussle to see who had the say.

SFR: After reading your novel, STAR CONQUERORS, I became aware that there seems to be a common thread linking parts of your work together, such as the novel, AS ON A DARKLING PLAIN, the short story, "Oh, Star, Won't You Hide Me" and your two stories in WEIRD HEROES. Was this planned?

BOVA: Yes, many of these books come from a similar background. The background area is the future world that I've created in my mind and the novels are particular stories within this enormous panoramic background. I think, really, if you want to stretch a point, all of the books I've done come out of that same background, all of them including MILLENIUM.

SFR: For those who aren't knowledgeable or perhaps are not aware that you are writing a future history series, could you give them a short overview of the series?

BOVA: Those who are not knowledgeable of this should rush right out and buy all the books and read them thoroughly. Then they'll know as much about it as you and I do.

SFR: Why have you chosen to use mythic overtones in this series?

BOVA: Every story has mythic overtones.

SFR: It seemed to somehow work out much more powerfully when I realized that "Oh, Stars, Won't You Hide Me" is actually a religious analogy.

BOVA: I don't know if you could call it religious. It's a story about the end of the universe. It should have powerful overtones. That story began when I was a kid, listening to YOUR HIT PARADE. It was a radio and later a television show doing the top ten tunes of the week. And Snooky Lanson did a Lucky Strike Extra one week, a song that was not in the top ten, but they wanted to do it anyway: the old folk song, "Sinner Man", the first time I had heard it. And there it is, there is that line, "Stars, won't you hide me". And I said, "Wow, there's a story that should be the last story in an anthology. The ultimate story. It took ten years for me to figure out what the story should be, except for that feeling.

SFR: Given your concerns in that story, are you worried that if we got out to the stars, we would, not having matured properly, act like barbarians?

BOVA: Not particularly. I think we will be human beings, there will be the same mixture of saints and devils among us. You could turn it around and say, "If we get to the stars, that's a test of a certain level of maturity". But you can't get there if you destroy your planet with pollution or war.

One of the points that I am bringing out in my new book, COLONY, is that the O'Niell colonies, this concept of colonizing the solar system now, is incredibly important for many, many reasons. One of the most important reasons is we will have spread the home grounds of the human race to beyond this one planet. So if we do screw up this planet, as we show every sign of doing, there will still be a human race surviving elsewhere. And not just scratching out a living on the surface of the moon, but surviving in self-sufficient earth-like colonies.

SFR: You seem to feel very strongly about the L-5 or the O'Niell colony concept?---

BOVA: The whole idea of expanding our habitat, our ecological niche, into space -- I don't think very many human beings will live in space in the next century or two. Space is inhospitable, it is a difficult area to live in, it will be very, very expensive, and only the very richest people, rich in either dollars or in technical wisdom, will be able to go.

I once broke my heart to the whole Science Fiction Convention when I was assigned the negative part of a debate. The resolution was: Resolved that we must back the O'Niell space colony concept. I was assigned the negative, and I pointed out to the audience that they are all in favor of the O'Neill space colony idea because they all have made the tacit assumption that they will go into space. I said, "None of you will. None of you have the dollars and none of you will have the training". The negative side won the debate.

SFR: Why did you not put O'Niell colonies in MILLENIUM?

BOVA: I wanted to concentrate in MILLENIUM, on the political revival of the cold war and the technology that I wanted to concentrate on was the ABM satellites, which I think is an area that the L-5 colony people have just not brought out at all. MILLENIUM was actually written and published before O'Niell's work came out. If I had thought a bit about it and put O'Niell's colonies in, it would have been a disruptive factor in the novel. You notice in MILLENIUM, I broke up China. I said China is not really an important factor in politics. We've gotten back to a two-nation confrontation, the Soviet Union and the United States. If I'd played fair and allowed China a major role, or even a United Europe a major role, it would have complicated beyond endurance, the story that I wanted to tell. I deliberately, and perhaps unjustifiably, pared away complications, made the story as clean and simple as I could, because I wanted to tell a certain story.

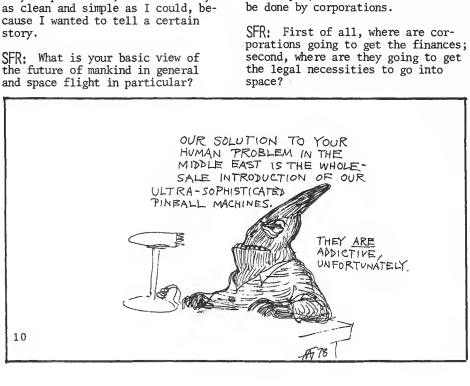
SFR: What is your basic view of the future of mankind in general and space flight in particular?

BOVA: I think that space flight offers perhaps the only opportunity we have to solve the problems here on earth. Most of the humans alive today will never go off this planet and yet the few that do have the opportunity will bring back riches. Three kinds of riches: energy, raw material and new social ideas. This is the first time since the opening up of North America by European colonists that we've had a chance to do this. Most of the people in Europe, Asia and Africa never left their land. They never became colonists and settled the New World and yet the development of the New World changed the lives of every human being in Europe and Asia and Africa and all over the world. Very few human beings will go into space, and yet the things that they do there will change the lives of all the people who remain on earth. It has already changed our lives more than we realize, more than we understand. The fact that we have observation satellites, the military of both United States and Russia, have satellites that can count the number of missile silos each nation can build, has led to the SALT talks, has led to beginning of a disarmament. Very few people credit the space program for beginning to lower the nuclear tension.

SFR: Do you believe that Jimmy Carter will ever favor using resources in order to spur the O'Niell colony concept?

BOVA: No, why should he? This should not be a national governmental job, this should be and will be done by corporations.

SFR: First of all, where are corporations going to get the finances; second, where are they going to get the legal necessities to go into space?



BOVA: The legal situation is being ironed out right now. Every major corporation in the United States (and as far as I know, the same situation exists in Europe) are all paying very high-priced planning people to examine what they can do to make a profit in space.

SFR: So it is very much in their heads ----

BOVA: It's very much in their heads. And they are all assuming that the United States government will provide a transportation system. The first step of this transportation system is the shuttle.

SFR: What if we don't?

BOVA: We will. Because the United States government does what the corporations tell her to do. If it looks good for RCA and General Motors and ITT, it's what the United States government winds up doing. And other governments too. What we're seeing today is very similar to what happened in the Renaissance. The baronies and duchies were absorbed into something new that nobody particularly liked, something called nations, and the driving force behind that was the technology of deepwater ships and gunpowder. We are seeing today a planetful of nations being absorbed into a new political organization that crosses national boundaries, called multi-national corporations. Technology there is mostly electronic.

SFR: Doesn't that frighten you?

BOVA: No more so than the creation of France would have frightened me if I were a Burgundian.

SFR: What if the multi-nationals decided that in order to alleviate certain pressures on themselves they would attempt to devalue the dollar....

BOVA: They've already done that.

SFR: What, say, if they decided a democracy was not the best system to work with and attempted to impose some sort of aristocracy or totalitarian government on us?

BOVA: I think that's a very real danger. To date the corporations have been content to allow nations to have whatever internal politics they choose as long as the corporation can run the nation. You get into situations, particularly in the smaller nations, like in Latin America, where we are just beginning to get into obvious conflicts. ITT had a war with Allende and Allende lost. It was the American government working for ITT that destroyed the leftist regime in Chile. This has been on the front page of the New York Times; it's no secret, it's no daring revelation, but it's a matter of looking at the way the world is really going.

All Science Fiction people assume some day, and in the not-too-distant future, we will have a world government. But I always ask the question, "How do you get there from here?" And nobody has ever been able to give me a satisfactory answer. MILLENIUM was an attempt to show how it might happen.

SFR: You could have the beginnings in America with the ties between Jimmy Carter and the Tri-lateral Commission and the Rockefeller-Morgan-Rothschild banking establishments.

BOVA: No nation will surrender its sovereignty. Neither Uganda nor the United States will willingly surrender its sovereignty to an international government. But the multi-national corporations are side-stepping the whole problem. The nations can keep their sovereignty. It just doesn't make any difference because they have no control over what the corporations do.

SFR: Like Chase Manhattan Bank.

BOVA: It's not a black-and-white situation. A nation as powerful as the United States has an enormous influence on how corporations behave, but the corporations have enormous influence on how the government of the United States behaves. Also on how the government of Salem, Oregon, behaves.

SFR: Jerry Pournelle has stated that he believes it is a do or die situation, with space flight, that our generation is the only chance mankind will have to get into space; if we don't do it now, it will never be done. Do you agree with him?

BOVA: No. I think maybe for the next thousand years he might be right but when you say 'never', you're including a long, long stretch of time.

SFR: I hope I've quoted him properly....

BOVA: Western Civilization suffered a fifteen-hundred-year hiatus between Aristotle and the Renaissance, between Aristotle and Galileo, essentially. It was a long time to wait for the next step, but the next step eventually was taken. It would be fascinating to consider what the world would be like if the Dark Ages had not occurred, if the Catholic Church, in its infinite wisdom, had not shut down the School of Athens in the second or third century A.D. And if there had never been a Dark Age, if the knowledge of the ancient Romans and Greeks had just kept on building, if Galileo or his counterpart had done his experiments in the third century instead of the sixteenth or seventeenth. And while you don't know what would happen, the concept is still the territory of good science fiction. That's where you examine these things, and you can have an awful lot of fun imagining either good or bad outcomes or both. But suppose we had stumbled onto nuclear power in the fifth century A.D. Would we be here today to talk about it? Would there be a human race? Would we have an interstellar empire going?

SFR: There's evidence that some form of primitive computer existed back in the third century B.C.

BOVA: Stonehenge is a form of primitive computer and that dates from two or three millennia B.C.

SFR: Did you know that the space shuttle is already being attacked by certain environmental groups? They claim that a recent environmental impact statement shows that the shuttle will cause damage to the ozone layer, depleting it at the rate of 0.2 per year based on an estimated 60 shuttle flights per year. They also claim it will cause acidic rain which is damaging to plants in addition to causing a sonic boom which will shatter windows near the space ports in California and Florida. Based on this they say it should be scrapped. Any reactions?

BOVA: What do they offer as an alternative?

SFR: Well, that we not violate God's territory up there.

BOVA: I'm reminded of a comment made by the janitor of the Boyd Theater. I, as a young usher, was sent by the manager of the theater, to tell him that the thermometer was down to 70 -- no, 69 and it should be 70. He said, "You tell that bastard to go pound sand up his ass". I don't recommend that as a course of action but I do think that environmentalists have got to balance the gains against the losses. I think, perhaps, their fears are overstated. But you wait until they realize that the L-5 business hinges on beaming large amounts of

microwaves through the atmosphere, you want to see screaming and crying? You haven't seen anything yet.

SFR: Also, another force against space by the folks who follow the Club of Rome, and have their own predictions of limited resources and who advocate a no-space-flight, no-technology, "steady-state" future.

BOVA: But that leads directly into a total world totalitarian regime like you would never be able to imagine. You would have to legislate the number of children people could have all over the world. Can you imagine what a crushing dictatorship would be required to carry that out?

SFR: These people would probably be in favor of it.

BOVA: No, they wouldn't, not for themselves. For other people it is fine, control them, but when the government says, "Hey, you've got three eggs in that refrigerator, and you should only have two", then they'd get a little upset. By then it would be too late. The Club of Rome Study is the greatest argument in favor of space flight that has ever been put on paper; it says in black and white in computer goddam printouts, "If you do not get out of this box, you're gonna have to control everything." The amount of air that everybody breathes will be government-issued.

SFR: Yet, the majority, 92%, according to a recent Harris poll, are in favor of space flight, and one proposed program that has attracted a large amount of attention and is one of the factors in space flight's current popularity, is the L-5 concept. Do you believe, that as it's being worked out right now, that L-5 will work? Technologically?

BOVA: No.

SFR: Why not?

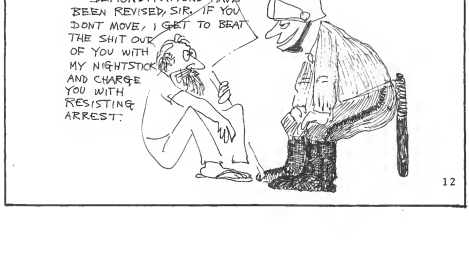
BOVA: Simple economics. If you're going to get your raw material on the moon, you're going to live on the moon. There's no reason to go schlepping out to L-5 and build the colony for that kind of cost when what you really want are solar power satellites in geosyncronous orbit around the earth.

SFR: How would one then best go about making an L-5 colony?

BOVA: If you want to make an L-5 colony, you do it exactly the way O'Niell has suggested. I don't think you'll make one, not for a long time to come. I think the economic drive would be to produce energy on the surface of the earth with solar power satellites that are built of lunar materials. L-5 is a needless step sideways.

SFR: Do we know enough about closed-system ecology to create an L-5 colony?

BOVA: No. I think O'Niell and many other people who've examined this have raised this question, so this is an area which needs much further study. We know enough about it to write interesting novels, but there's an old piece of wisdom in the aerospace industry when a manufacturer comes out with a new airplane, a commercial airliner: Wait a year before you buy a ticket on one. There is always a little bug in the system somewhere that results in a crash. Or they say, "Aha, yes, the door pops open when it shouldn't". All you have to do is tighten this screw a little more, then it's a perfectly wonderful airplane and goes into service for 20 years without a hitch.



SFR: The economics of pocket calculators, for instance, shows that the cost eventually would come down for L-5s.

BOVA: Oh, the cost would certainly come down, but I do think that if your real objective is to build solar power satellites to sell the energy, and you're going to build these satellites with materials on the moon, you'll build them with a lunar station, not an L-5 colony. L-5 is a lovely idea and will eventually come to pass, I think, perhaps not at L-5 -- as a matter of fact, if you're looking at the aesthetics of it, you would place your colony at L-4, because you get a much prettier view of the moon from L-4. From an L-5, you're seeing a lot of the back side of the moon which is largely high lands and is rather monotonous to look at.

SFR: On another topic, you were one of the first to criticize STAR WARS in a letter to TIME magazine.

BOVA: Well, they misquoted me.

SFR: Could you elaborate upon your criticism of the movie, first of all your reason for writing the letter?

BOVA: What happened was, the staff people at TIME, who were going to do an article about the movie, invited me to see the preview. I went with Victoria Schochet and Robert Fones, my associate editor and assistant editor. It seemed obvious to me before the lights went out and the movie began, that the TIME people, who were there ostensably to see the film so they could write an article about it, had already gotten the word from on high that this was going to be an extremely favorable article.

We watched the movie, giggling and saying, "Oh, no, not that, not that cliche -- yep, there it is!" When the film was over, they took us out to lunch, and I spent the entire lunch telling them everything that I thought was wrong with the movie, which was considerable. The major things that I objected to, aside from the fact that there was not an original frame in the whole film, that it was all so highly imitative that I wished that I were seeing the real thing. I would much rather see Errol Flynn than that kid with the acne, whoever he is. The major problems I had with the film were not the technological problems, or the science fictional problems, but just plain old drama and interest. The film was dull, and as a story, there was nothing there. I mean, people running, going 'Boo!' really is not drama. The beautiful princess was neither

beautiful nor had the slightest shred of royalty about her. She looked and sounded and behaved like a dropout from Glendale High. This philosophy of "Trust the Force" is straight out of Madison Avenue. That's the philosophy for a slave. Don't use the computer, don't use the technology that people have sweated for centuries to create, just wait for Alec Guiness to whisper in your ear and everything will come out all right. That is pure bullshit and it is Hollywood bullshit at its bullshittiest.

There are a large number of things right about STAR WARS. After all, 200 million people have seen the movie all over the world. I think for a large part, it is the Christmas tree phenomenon, however. You turn off your brains and revert to infantile fantasy. There are a lot of people jumping around, there are a lot of bright lights flashing and nothing very much else is going on. As far as science fiction is concerned, George Lucas has pointed out to people that it is not science fiction and was never intended to be science fiction, but that's the way it gets sold. The public tends to think that anything with space ships and rockets in it is Sci-Fi. For somebody who has never read a science fiction story they can now go to see STAR WARS and believe that they know what the genre is all about.

SFR: Could you not forgive STAR WARS its faults in view of the large potential audience of readers it could bring?

BOVA: No, I don't believe it's bringing in a large amount of readers.

SFR: Are you aware that the reissue of THX-1138, the novelization of the George Lucas movie, which you did, is now out again with a cover blurb which reads, "From the Man Who Brought You STAR WARS"?

BOVA: Yes, I am well aware of that. The publisher finally managed to put in the last 3 pages which they had left out of the original novelization. As you know, in the novel, the book ends with old THX clambering up a ladder. This was not the real ending, of course, the publisher having left out the last few pages. And I got calls from all over the country asking me if I had turned into a New Wave writer.

SFR: Did it end in the middle of a sentence?

BOVA: No, it happened that the sentence ended at the end of the page.

SFR: What are your feelings on the movie CLOSE ENCOUNTERS?

BOVA: I was rather disappointed in it. I expected a lot more. I believe it builds up to a marvelous ending which is actually an anticlimax. You expect something really spectacular to come out and what does is the Munchkins.

SFR: Five-year-old girls.

BOVA: Yes, well, whatever they are. It once again shows a total lack of imagination, of depth of thought, that goes into these films.

It is not enough to do wonderful special effects. The basis of science fiction is thought, thinking of new ideas. These films are dealing with old hackneyed material, and they haven't produced a new thought yet.

SFR: Do you think current novels in science fiction could be filmed today?

BOVA: They could be filmed today but I'm wondering if they would attract a large enough audience? There is a very big difference between science fiction novels and science fiction movies. It is a very curious thing which appears to be mental, and I'm to the point where I wonder if we will ever get good science fiction movies. Because published science fiction, the things that you and I read and write, is written largely for people who enjoy thinking. And this is a relatively small audience. When you spend twenty million dollars making a movie, you have to appeal to a large, large audience. So you have to appeal to the lowest common denominator.

SFR: Some people would say that the concept that science fiction only appeals to a small audience smacks of elitism.

BOVA: Yes, it certainly does. Which would you rather be with, the elites or the drones? You have read THE MARCHING MORONS. That's the fate of the universe, Charlie. If you're not with the winners, you're with the losers.

SFR: Speaking of losers, you were the science advisor for a series called THE STAR LOST.

BOVA: (Laughs) Yes, I turned that into a profit, fortunately.

SFR: You mean the novel STAR CROSSED.

BOVA: Yes, that television series

is probably the worst thing ever put on commercial TV.

SFR: How did you get rooked into that?

BOVA: Well, it was Harlan Ellison's idea. He originated the series and it sounded very, very good. Harlan went to Twentieth Century Fox and told them, "Let's do a novel on television". They thought and pondered and said, (this was many years before ROOTS) "No, it wouldn't work." So Harlan comes up with a new idea, which is fantastically successful, only he's five years ahead of the idea's inception. Just as he got himself totally barred from ABC for a while for chiding them in print for not picking up a new show called ALL IN THE FAMILY. The basic ideas he had were pretty good and he wanted a science advisor, somebody who could work with Doug Trumball, the executive producer. The other key people were TV people. It was a lot of fun. I liked working with Harlan. Depite all the terrible stories about Harlan, he is very easy to work with, one of the few really professional writers in this business. It is very much a pleasure to work with him. The writers strike came along and for awhile there, while the writers were all on strike, they got somebody to start doing scripts, which were pretty terrible. Eventually, Twentieth Century Fox moved the show to Toronto, partially because of the strike, and partially because they thought it would be cheaper. Now, the big problem, the thing that really sank THE STAR LOST, in twenty-twenty hindsight, was that they were not able to sell the con-

cept of a big science fiction package to any of the 3 major networks. So they decided to do it in syndication. Because then, it would not be in prime time, Twentieth Century Fox started cutting the expenditures to the bone. Now off it went to Toronto to be done by a group of people who had never, never done a dramatic television show before.

SFR: Never?

BOVA: Never. The actors, of course, had, but the directors, the backup people, none of the crew, had ever been involved in a dramatic TV show. You saw the results.

SFR: Outside of a few movies, done in the 1950s, it is one of the worst things I have ever seen.

BOVA: I tell you, THE STAR CROSSED, is a purely fictional novel, that was inspired by my experience there at THE STAR LOST. But although THE STAR CROSSED is wildly unlikely and improbable in some respects, it does not exaggerate the actual events re THE STAR LOST. In THE STAR LOST there was drama, conflict, pathos, danger behind the cameras. In front of the cameras, though, total bathos and utter boredom.

SFR: Unfortunately, though, you didn't get to take your name off it as Harlan did.

BOVA: No, I didn't have that option. All the people in the Screen Writer's Guild, had that option with their working contract. Science advisor, no. It is sort of like being science advisor to Richard Nixon. Everybody listened to me, paid me quite a bit, said I was doing a great job and in the end went ahead and did things their own way, totally ignoring my advise.

SFR: Like taking the money and running.

BOVA: Yeah, except in my case, I took the money and flew.

SFR: Is there any chance of increasing the print size in ANALOG? This is a question that several people asked me to ask you.

BOVA: No. The print size?

SFR: Yes, some people said they found it hard to read.

BOVA: I've never heard that complaint before. However, speaking of print size, how about Charlie Brown and LOCUS? Now LOCUS is hard to read.

SFR: Speaking of LOCUS, and Charlie Brown, have you had a chance to read what he says in his 1977 magazine summary about ANALOG?

BOVA: No, I haven't.

SFR: In LOCUS 208, Charlie Brown mentions that ANALOG had a poor sales year in 1977. The magazine is dull and boring and he wouldn't be surprised, meaning Charlie Brown, if Ben Bova resigned.

BOVA: Well, I think he's hit the nail on the head as far as the circulation is concerned. We had to raise the price to $1.25 and that did cause a drop in circulation, but it is building back up. I think as far as Charlie finding the maga-

zine dull, that's his personal opinion. The letters we get from readers indicate that they find it anything but dull. We get a fair amount of letters from very young readers, which is good; we're trying to reach the young reader without deteriorating the quality of the magazine. We have had several write in and say, "Gee, I've just found a magazine that's really exciting and I'm glad I happened onto it". Of course, we get lots of letters from readers every week telling me what I'm doing wrong. This is an important feature of the magazine. ANALOG should be an idea battleground and that's good. When we stop having readers getting irate at the magazine, then we'll be in trouble.

A recent story of ours, "To Keep and Bear Arms", has got many of the gun people from all over the country writing and calling in. They are very upset over the basic premise of the story, which is an amendment to the Constitution saying that the people have a duty to bear arms. They might not worry about other issues, but when it's their nose being tweaked, they get upset pretty fast.

SFR: Then you have no intention of quitting?

BOVA: No, I haven't any intention of quitting. I think I might, some day, do it -- I'm not sure when. You see, I've always considered myself to be a writer, a professional writer, and the ANALOG job is financially, and you might say, spiritually, a hobby. They're paying me less than they did Campbell. John certainly didn't buy his groceries with the money he was paid from ANALOG, and neither can I. There's just not enough money involved in the magazine.

SFR: You mean Mr. Campbell had other outside writings?

BOVA: No, he had other outside holdings. His family was much better off than mine.

SFR: How did you get the ANALOG editorship?

BOVA: By surprise. When John died the Conde Nast management asked Kay Tarrant to prepare a list of potential replacements for John Campbell. Kay in turn asked several of the magazine's steady contributors to make up lists for her. I was not a steady contributor. Nobody asked me to make such a list, but apparently my name popped up on two or three of the lists, and I was interviewed along with several other people. When they interviewed me I said, "Gee, you don't say no to an opportunity like this. It is like being asked to run for president". I told the guy who was interviewing me that my experience in editing had been with very small magazines. I knew nothing about putting out a national magazine. He chuckled and said, "We know everything about putting out a national magazine. We don't know anything about ANALOG". The man who was interviewing me, by the way, is now the president of Conde Nast. So eventually they called me back, I was living in Boston at the time, and he read to me a piece of the fiction and non-fiction of all the people who were considered. He said mine was the easiest to understand, so I got the job.

For a while I remained in Boston because my kids were still living there and I commuted down to New York three days a week, then went back to Boston. Eventually, I moved into an apartment here in New York.

SFR: I remember in P. Schuyler Miller's review of your first novel...

BOVA: You know, I just ran across that. I was going through some old papers and things that my son brought down from Boston and in them Sky's review of my first novel, THE STAR CONQUERERS. He was much kinder to the book than it actually warranted.

SFR: When he said in the review that he would like to see a lot more of you, I'll bet he never thought you'd end up as his editor.

BOVA: He couldn't have been more surprised than I was. I was sure somebody else would get the job and the two I thought most likely were Poul Anderson and Harry Harrison.

SFR: How do your philosophies differ from John Campbell's? In particular your editorial philosophy?

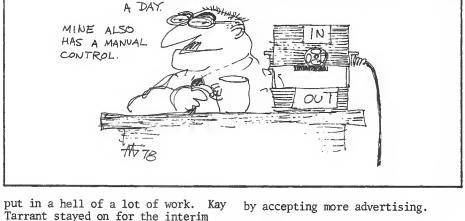
BOVA: My philosophy's very simple. Try to do the same thing John did. I think John worked out a tremendous office management system which continues to work very well. His philosophy was we buy the stories that we like and that is what we print. And if you see a manuscript that you don't like and you believe needs some changes, you tell the author, "Make the changes and we will buy it". Too many of the editors feel they must buy the story from the writer and then rewrite or "better" it. I know that's happened to me many times. John's philosophy was, and I think it is a good one, is that when we buy a story we are buying the rights to print it, nothing else.

SFR: Do you bounce ideas off your writers as John Campbell did?

BOVA: To a much lesser extent. I think John was a very unique man in that he would send you letters of rejection explaining what was wrong with your story, which were many times longer than the original stories. Each page of his rejection would have 10 or 15 story ideas in it. I've never tried to do that. It was a special ability of John's and I don't know anybody else who could do it. On the other hand, when John took over the magazine in '37, there weren't enough stories that he liked. He had to create the stories and in doing so he created some authors. He had to remake science fiction into what he wanted, and he was always worried that the day would come when there weren't enough stories to fill the magazine. Everything John did at ANALOG was set up to guarantee the magazine enough stories to keep going. His editorials, his personal conversations, his correspondence with writers and with everybody else (because in science fiction anybody can turn out to be a writer) were aimed to produce stories for ANALOG. He was constantly heckling, badgering, trying in any way he could, to persuade people to write. Now, I came into the magazine in a very, very different situation. There were lots of writers out there. Science fiction had very few magazine short story outlets. I'm sitting at the top of the pyramid; everybody's sending their stuff to ANALOG first.

SFR: How was the transition period?

BOVA: The worst part of it was that in the five months or so between John Campbell's death and my coming into the magazine, nobody had read the manuscripts. There was literally a roomfull of manuscripts. I put in a hell of a lot of work. Kay Tarrant stayed on for the interim period and helped me with the office work and taught me about it so that by the time I had reduced the manuscripts to an average weekly pile I had a good feeling for the job.



SFR: What did she do -- did she retire?

BOVA: Yes.

SFR: How tough was it in your early days of editing ANALOG?

BOVA: When people would write in saying, "I'm going to cancel my subscription because such and such a story or illustration appeared", when in actuality John, not me, had bought the item in question. I would usually tell them, "Well, unfortunately John did buy it". People kept trying to put John in a box and say, "Aha, now I know what he is really like", but John was always changing and changing the magazine, too. It is a shame, I think, that he died in one of his down periods. I think that in another couple of years he would have started off in a new direction and everybody would have thought once again, "He is a terrific innovator".

SFR: Do you have any desire yourself to start off in a new direction?

BOVA: I am doing that constantly. What we are trying to do at ANALOG is to broaden our own base of operation, so that we can keep the price of the magazine fairly stable. I think it is a disaster for magazines to keep passing on their cost increases to their readers. You just can't go on that way indefinitely.

SFR: Hopefully, that could be done by accepting more advertising.

BOVA: No, science fiction magazines don't have enough readers to attract advertisers. No advertiser in his right mind would spend money on ads to science fiction magazines.

SFR: How so?

BOVA: Well, because science fiction magazines have such a small audience that a national advertiser can get a much better return for his money in another medium. What would you advertise in a science fiction magazine that a specific reader would not see elsewhere?

SFR: Are you going to loosen the restrictions on violence and sex in ANALOG?

BOVA: There are no restrictions on violence and sex in ANALOG. That

has been my philosophy for a long time. Just as I would not buy a story simply because it had sex or dirty language in it, I would not reject a story because it had sex or dirty language in it. I think, in many cases, there are stories where the language or the sex is very extraneous to the story and detracts from it. At that point I ask the writer to do something about it. We have very few restrictions now. On the other hand, many of our readers are very uptight. We did a story with a verb "to fuck" in it and got several rather stiff letters from our readers: "If you use that word again, I'll cancel my subscription!". I wrote right

back to them asking which particular word it was. There are some we can't do without. We have to be a little touchy about it. No doubt many of our readers do get upset. In fact some of them have even written me and said, they like to read ANALOG because they know there won't be anything in there to upset them. They don't get upset over arguments about how to run an interstellar empire or nuclear power plants but some aspect of sex and some gutter language does bother them.

SFR: How do you view academe's intrusion into science fiction?

BOVA: I think academe's intrusion everywhere has been pretty much of a disaster. Take a look at our educational system in general. It's such a shambles that it's hard to believe that teachers are getting into science fiction -- they should be getting into reading and writing. Now, I realize that many teachers do science fiction in an effort to get their students interested in reading. As far as that is successful, I guess it's okay. I have a feeling that what we need in schools is a return to some degree of authoritarianism. School children are not the equal of adults, and a teacher should not be a student's pal. A teacher should be an authority figure who says, "Do this, it is good for you, and if you don't do it, you will be punished".

SFR: You once said that GALAXY was owned by the Mafia, or at least you were quoted as saying that at a Writer's conference. In Washington state in 1977.

BOVA: UPD is not owned by it but the story in New York is that they are up to their ears in hock. Universal Publishing Distribution, that is. And they have been selling pieces of the company off to pay off their debts, and they have been putting as little money as possible into the remaining pieces of the company. They have been trying to get rid of GALAXY for quite some time, but they have made the price much too high for anybody to be seriously interested. So by putting as little money into GALAXY as they possibly can, the end result is that one of the top magazines in the field is really struggling, financially, editorially and in every other way. Jim Baen, at the end of his tenure there, was working out of his home, because UPD would no longer pay to rent an office. That is the publishing business. You guys only see writers and editors when they are having fun, when they are being lionized. The reality is much grimmer.

SFR: What are your thoughts on the controversy surrounding nuclear power?

BOVA: I feel like Frank Herbert, who tours the country as an environmentalist, and tells everybody that nuclear power is the safest form of power because no one has ever gotten killed from it.

SFR: What would you say to those who say that a lot of nuclear power plant workers have been killed by leukemia which was caused from working in the plant?

BOVA: I would like to see the actual results. I would compare it with the number of coal miners who get knocked off every year. The number of people who die from a hydroelectric power dam collapsing -- nuclear power is very clean, very safe; as for those who are against it, I've been a journalist all my life. I know slanted news coverage when I see it. I have a feeling that a lot of the people that are opposing nuclear power are being covertly supported by the Arabs. No one stands to gain more by nuclear power going down in this country than the Arabs.

SFR: Then it is a conspiracy?

BOVA: Oh, I doubt it, but it would make a damned good novel. People are easily gulled. We were talking about elitism a while back. If you are not a member of the elite, you are a member of the hoi polloi. And the hoi polloi always marches off in the wrong direction. They are easily manipulated. A lot of the stuff being said about nuclear power and the damage it would do, is utter nonsense. One thing that concerns me about science fiction readers is how short-sighted they can be. Nuclear waste will be with us for 20,000 years, some of them say. Bullshit! In 50 years it will be off the planet.

By the way, did you know that today is the 20th anniversary of the first successful orbiting of the Vanguard satellite? I was on the project at that time, and about 20 years ago there were a lot of us orbiting around up there. Right alongside the satellite.

SFR: Due to the success of STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS there are now a lot of magazines on the newsstands which look at the visual side of science fiction. There are also several new SF mags slated, most interestingly an entry from Penthouse Publications, entitled NOVA...

BOVA: Yes, I had wine with Bob and Kathy Guccione. They asked me over to chat about NOVA. They are very proud of what they are doing, and I was quite impressed with the fact that they seem to want to do a very reputable job. When I first heard about NOVA, I was afraid it was going to be naked broads in outer space or Bermuda Triangle stories. But the main emphasis seems to be not just on science fiction but on factual science, of the Carl Sagen and Isaac Asimov variety, but that, I think, is fairly eye-opening in that they think there is a major market for that kind of stuff in this country. And I think they are right. They are going about

putting the magazine together the way the big publishers would. And they are looking first at, frankly, the kind of advertising they can get for it. That determines their budget which in turn determines their format and circulation. There will be a large amount of non-fiction in the magazine.

SFR: Most long-time observers of the field tend to view this current magazine activity with cynicism. How do you view it?

BOVA: Well, if I am cynical about it, it is only because I believe we have enough readers in the United States to support big magazines. But I think that situation is changing. Look at Isaac Asimov, who has a very loyal and steady readership for his books. And his magazine has become quite a success in a very short time. And look at Carl Sagan and the other science writers. They have carved out quite a slice of the marketplace for their writing, and I think if handled properly, a big, slick magazine of non-fiction and science fiction could work. Look at PSYCHOLOGY TODAY, for instance.

SFR: Do you believe that a magazine like NOVA would help ANALOG?

BOVA: Yes, very much so. I think that the more science fiction we find on the newsstand, the better each science fiction magazine will do. Also note that PENTHOUSE spent five million dollars over a three or four year period making VIVA a success, and it has just now got into the black. I think it is important if you are starting a magazine venture, to stay with it for four or five years. It usually takes that long for a major magazine to make it. Too many magazine publishers start out on a shoestring and fold quickly because they can't wait until the magazine shows a profit.

SFR: In that respect Asimov's magazine might be an anomaly.

BOVA: Yes, it is. It was done on a fairly small basis and it keyed very directly into a very easily identifiable and reachable market.

SFR: How will NOVA affect ANALOG?

BOVA: Our authors, both the big ones in the field down to the newcomers, know that ANALOG gives them the best treatment for their particular sort of stories. If NOVA begins to buy stories in the ANALOG vein, then we might have some competition at the top of the market. But at ANALOG we still seek out the new writers, by that I mean not just young writers, but people new to writing, of whatever age. A large part of our contributors are people who have turned to ANALOG and writing after years in other careers.

SFR: If Guccione called you up and asked you tomorrow, "Hey, would you like to be editor of NOVA," would you accept or not?

BOVA: Probably not.

SFR: What do you think should be done about some of the poor writing and ideation in the SF field? Do you believe editors ought to be tougher?

BOVA: No, given their position, they are about as tough as they can be. Science fiction is an area where the concept of the story is considered more important than the form.

SFR: So you would agree with the critic who said, "SF is uniquely equipped to deal with the totality of human experience, yet it usually gives us pat answers to complex problems, and treats us to ill-conceived, hastily-sketched characters."

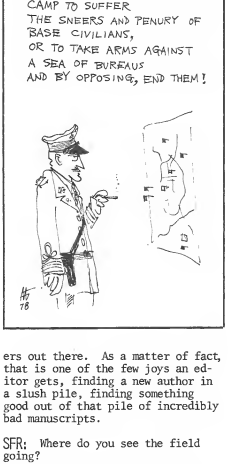
BOVA: Well, that is the usual kind of critic bullshit. The fact that the form is considered to be less important than the content drives critics up the wall. They are accustomed to examining individual paragraphs and praising them for their beauty or lack of such. In science fiction you have the sort of writing which is not usually used in creative writing courses. It is stories about real people doing real things in fantastic situations. The form and style is not as important as the idea, content and background. Good characterization is very important in science fiction. It is very difficult to do in the very short form, one reason why I think the novelette is science fiction's best length.

SFR: As an undergraduate English major, I know a lot of professors who view the plot as an unnecessary evil.

BOVA: That is because they don't have the necessary brains to understand it. Their minds get tired trying to follow something that complex. They like to dissect paragraphs, they cannot think in terms of stories. Science fiction writers are doing what Homer did -- we are entertaining a tough demanding audience that is easily distracted. We are telling stories for the same reason Homer did, because the human nervous system is built to accept and digest things in a certain manner. There is a lot of lovely writing and a lot of experimental writing. The main audience out there just won't go for it. They want stories they can understand. They want to be entertained. In fact, while a reader is reading a story, he wants to believe that he could be in the story, that he could be the hero. It is why you find a Poul Anderson, a Gordon Dickson, becoming successful, because they can write a story which you can put yourself into.

SFR: How do you feel about the new talent that is coming into the field?

BOVA: There are a lot of good writ-



ers out there. As a matter of fact, that is one of the few joys an editor gets, finding a new author in a slush pile, finding something good out of that pile of incredibly bad manuscripts.

SFR: Where do you see the field going?

BOVA: I think with the technological data that is coming out about colonization of space, the writing can become much more realistic. Also biology is an area where SF writers can expand.

SFR: Where do you see your writing going or where would you like to see it go?

BOVA: To the Nobel prize for literature.

SFR: Thank you very much, Mr. Bova.

BOVA: Thank you.

ADDENDUM

NOTE BY ELTON ELLIOTT:

Several months after the above interview was completed, I heard rumors that Ben Bova had resigned from ANALOG. I checked with Victoria Schochet, assistant editor of ANALOG, who confirmed the fact that Mr. Bova had indeed resigned, and on the sixth of July, 1978, I got in touch with Ben via phone.

Here are his comments:

SFR: Why did you resign?

BOVA: Well, I think seven years in one place is long enough. Also Conde Nast was unwilling to put money into expanding their SF. I believe that SF should make great strides. They disagreed, and so before the situation deteriorated further, I said to hell with it. They are way too conservative.

SFR: Was it a matter of money?

BOVA: No, it was a matter of policy. I believe that SF should be at the profit center of publishing. I wanted to expand into records, books, radio, TV and new magazines. As a Heinlein character once said, "It's raining soup. It is time to get a bucket". To answer a few questions your editor, Richard Geis, raised in letter to me:

My resignation is not over more money for myself. It is not because I wanted to make radical changes in ANALOG. It is not because I wanted more money for writers. I found that the money makes no difference as to the quantity or quality of manuscripts. As for increased competition from ASIMOV'S, they're past-oriented. This isn't the direction I believe SF magazines should go.

SFR: What is the future for you?

BOVA: I am looking over several editorial positions and offers. I would really like to just concentrate on writing for a while.

SFR: Have you been offered a position at NOVA?

BOVA: I won't confirm or deny that. I believe that tells you what you need to know.

SFR: How about ANALOG magazine and the ANALOG book line? Who will be in charge of them for the moment?

BOVA: Victoria Schochet, former SF editor at Harper & Row, will continue in the interim.

SFR: How about the new editor of ANALOG? Two names I have heard are George R.R. Martin and Spider Robinson.

BOVA: Neither one is being considered. We are, however, in the process of recommending and considering new potential editors; one name I have recommended is Stanley Schmidt. As for the final selection, I have some input but not the final vote.

SFR: To another subject, have you noticed that Pocket Books put 'SF' on the spine of COLONY. I thought it was to be marketed as a mainstream novel.

BOVA: All I know is that it is at the front of a lot of the stores I have seen, but, God, yes, it is on the spine. Well, let's hope the average readers don't notice it. It does, however, have a cover which looks like RETURN OF MANDINGO, which ought to make it sell like crazy.

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HE HEARS ....

BLOOD! THE LIFE AND FUTURE TIMES OF JACK THE RIPPER
As read by Robert Bloch and Harlan Ellison

Alternate World Recordings, Inc.
$13.95

Reviewed by Mark Mansell

Science fiction recordings have become big business in the past two years. Although there are over a handful of companies putting out spoken-word records of various authors, the two leaders in the field are Caedmon and Alternate World Recordings. Among science fiction fans, Alternate World is the more popular (although Caedman is larger) because of the excellent choices of the author readings, and because the company is run by Roy and Shirley Torgeson, who are closely involved in science fiction.

BLOOD! is a collection of stories involving Jack the Ripper as read by Robert Bloch and Harlan Ellison, the authors. The stories are Bloch's "Yours Truly, Jack the Ripper" and "A Toy for Juliette", and Ellison's is "The Prowler in the City at the Edge of the World", which is the sequel to "Toy". The album is Alternate World's first two-record set, and next to the superlative "Harlan!" album, it is Alternate World's finest effort.

Bloch's and Ellison's reading styles are almost completely opposite, yet their voices perfectly complement the stories. Bloch reads in a calm, sedate fashion, while Ellison's reading is excited, almost hysterically tense. For the stories involved, this is perfect, since Bloch's two tales are more straightforward narratives, while Ellison's is filled with verbal pyrotechnics.

The readings are all of such high quality it is hard to pick out favorite scenes. But I'd have to say that Bloch's describing the Ripper's activities in "Yours Truly" and Ellison's telling of the replay of one of the Ripper's killings were two high points. There is some incidental background music in the Bloch tales, but is nearly absent in the Ellison, which doesn't need it. The music for "Yours Truly" is suitable dark, while that for "Toy" is light-hearted in keeping with the tone of the story.

All in all, this is an excellent package, well worth the rather steep price. I hear that it has been nominated for a Hugo, the first record to be nominated in the dramatic category (although it is a foregone conclusion that STAR WARS will win). The nomination is well-deserved, since the only bad thing I can say about the record set is the rather mediocre Tom Barber jacket illustration.

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CONTINUED FROM P. 7

rates, the last few years have been very mild. This is because newspapers and magazines use second class. And they have clout with congress and the rate-setting commission.

Since it has been to my advantage to send single copies of SFR bookrate heretofore, I went that route. Now a six ounce SFR with envelope costs 48¢ bookrate, but only 34¢ second class transient. So I will shift. Two or more copies of SFR will continue to go bookrate.

But the lesson is obvious here: fan publishers should investigate second class transient rates for their magazines. (I'm still not sure if you have to have a second class mailing permit to mail at second class transient rates. I get different answers from different post office people. Check it out.)

With the rate of inflation in this country now at 10-11%, and with the postal unions wanting a 14% wage increase (with the possibility of a strike this summer), it seems to me that postage rates will continue to skyrocket in the first, third and fourth classes. Political considerations and economic conditions will determine the next first class raise --and the "invisible" third and book rate rates will get the goosing continually.

7-7-78 Further word on the postal service rip-off rate structure: in 1979 the single piece fourth class book rate will rise to 59¢. Up from the latest rise to 48¢. The cost of book rate mailing has virtually (or will have) doubled by July of 1979, from july of 1977, and will have tripled from July of 1975.

The postal unions' contracts run out on July 20th of this year, though no one expects a strike. Well, maybe New York....

What I can't understand is the seemingly arbitrary and fiendishly contrived rate of 59¢ for the first pound via book rate. You can bet your banana the post office will not make available any 59¢ stamps! Mailers without the expensive postage dispensing machines will have to piece the 59¢ postage out of smaller demomination stamps. Let's see... a thirty cent stamp, a couple ten cent stamps, and a nine cent stamp. If those stamps are available.

I may just put 59 one cent stamps on the envelopes and drive them nuts making sure they cancel every one of them.

LETTER FROM NEAL WILGUS

June 12, 1978

'Your "impassioned editorial" (SFR #25, p.22) about writers wayward enough to write for intelligent readers rather than the brainwashed masses seems like a plea for one-dimensionality to me. Why are we always trying to impose a single criteria on such a hybrid creature as science fiction -- or writing in general or life, for that matter? Surely, there are more than two kinds of readers just as there are more than two kinds of writers -- in fact, there are as many kinds of writers and readers as there are people writing and reading.

'Your insistence on concentrating on the story/action and letting all the other levels take care of themselves seems unnecessarily narrow to me. Of course, there are many writers who operate that way and I have no quarrel with them -- how could I since it's none of my business how they work. But there are many writers who do think in advance about Message or Meaning or Miscellaneous who also produce fine work and it seems pointless and counterproductive to rage against them as you do in SFR. Action-oriented writers produce action-oriented fiction and other-oriented writers produce other-oriented fiction -- and thank the Muses for such an ingenious plan.

'The first installment of ONE IMMORTAL MAN is a good example of the action-oriented story you advocate and I enjoyed it and look forward to continuing it next issue -- but surely you wouldn't want to limit fiction solely to this level, even if you could. With its concentration on the glittering surface ONE IMMORTAL MAN does what you want it to which I assume is to grip the reader's attention and compel him to carry through to the end of the story/experience you've prepared for him. Well and good, but so does every writer/entertainer from Edgar Rice Burroughs to James Joyce and I see no need to reject one just because you like the other.'

((You try to pigeon-hole me as an action/entertainment-only advocate. Tsk. My position from the beginning is that STORY comes first, then once the basics are taken care of, a writer is free, if he has the skill, to put all kinds of message and style and etc. in the cracks, under the floor, in the attic ...

((I can and do enjoy other-oriented writers' work ... but if they reject Story and lean on content and character ... they'd better be damned good at it to carry me and most readers. And in ef, DAMN FEW writers are capable of that.

*((I thought I had some content in ONE IMMORTAL MAN, with more to come; subtle and not so subtle comment on mankind, on people ... on societies ... Symbolism ... Tsk. You're just not looking deeply enough. You're not WORKING HARD ENOUGH. Get off your ass and read between the lines. Huh! Call yourself a reviewer! *Goddamned lazy readers .... *))*

LETTER FROM ED POWELL

18 June 1978

'Enjoyed the interviews -- especially the one with George Scithers. I've submitted three shorts to him so far (all rejected -- alas) but he really does give more feedback than any other editor. They're short, to the point, but they talk about your story and why it was rejected ... They're not mass-produced and standard, leaving you with the feeling no human actually handled your MS. If more editors did this it might alleviate the despair over a reject and, instead, prompt those new writers to produce the type of story editors want.'

7-8-78 In the May, 1978 issue of LOCUS was a front page article/story dealing with a new standard Pocket Books contract which is outraging authors and agents.

I think it so important that I asked Charles Brown, publisher of LOCUS, and Marta Randall, author of the analysis-of-the-contract article, for permission to reprint the story and article. They both graciously agreed. It appears below.

I will have further comment at the end of the article.

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SFWA CHALLENGES POCKET BOOKS

Pocket Books has drastically changed its book contract with authors. According to the SFWA, the new contract is totally unacceptable. SFWA grievance committee chairman Joe Haldeman has been trying to negotiate some basic in it, but has been unsuccessful.

Peter Mayer, president of Pocket Books, feels there is nothing wrong with the contract as a basic start-

ing point and that various points are certainly negotiable.

Joe Haldeman contends that the new contract is so one-sided, it cannot be considered even a starting point, especially for new writers who have no experience in the field.

The following discussion of the contract by Marta Randall, one of the first SF authors to receive it as an offer, covers some of the points involved.

CAVEAT AUTHOR: THE NEW POCKET BOOKS CONTRACT

By MARTA RANDALL

PocketBooks, a division of Simon & Shuster (who are in turn a division of Gulf & Western Corporation) has recently printed up and is using a new standard contract, which may qualify as the most regressive, pernicious, and unacceptable contract going. Whether or not you are contemplating selling anything to PocketBooks, you should know about this contract; the general feeling is that if PocketBooks can get away with it, we'll be seeing this type of contract from all the other publishers, too.

Set forth below are the most objectionable clauses of the contract, first as printed by PocketBooks, then translated from the legalese. There may be further clauses, not discussed here, which various writers will find objectionable, but I want to limit this discussion to the main events.

Clause 4: If the complete manuscipt (or related materials) delivered by the Author, is not, in the Publisher's sole judgement, acceptable to it in content or form, Publisher may terminate this arrangement by written notice and upon such notice (or upon Publisher's failure to accept the manuscript within the applicable period provided in Paragraph 5(b)), this agreement shall terminate without further obligation or liability between the parties except that all sums paid to the Author by the Publisher hereunder shall be repayable by the Author, and except as provided in Paragraph 23 hereof.

Note "shall be repayable by the Author". In PocketBooks' previous standard contract, and in any other standard contract, the phrase reads "but only in the event the script is subsequently placed with another publisher and only to the extent of any proceeds received thereby". In other words, if the publisher rejects the completed manuscript, the author has the right to sell it elsewhere, and *if it is sold elsewhere*, the original publisher is reimbursed its original advance (except if you sell the book for less than the original advance, in which case the original publisher collects a smaller sum).

Under the current PocketBooks contract, however, the author owes PocketBooks the advance back whether or not the book is sold elsewhere, and, presumably, owes it back immediately upon rejection of the book by PocketBooks.

Clause 5(a): Within ninety (90) days after delivery of the complete manuscript and related materials the Publisher shall determine whether the same are acdeptable to it in form or content.

The normal term for acceptance or rejection is thirty days. This is three times as long. Clause 5(a) further states:

If Publisher requests one or more revisions of the manuscript of the Work...the publisher's time to determine the acceptability thereof shall be extended for an additional ninety (90) days after resubmission by the Author... No request for revisions shall be deemed to obligate

the Publisher to accept the final revision or to constitute conditional acceptance thereof.

This makes six months after submission of the original completed manuscript (supposing that you do the revisions at light-speed) during which PocketBooks need not pay you, not even tell you whether they accept the book or not.

Clause 5(b): If Publisher fails to accept the complete manuscript (including related materials) or a revision thereof within the time above provided, the Author shall have the right to notify the Publisher in writing that unless the manuscript is accepted within forty-five (45) days after the delivery of such notice, the manuscript will then be deemed unacceptable and this agreement will terminate in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 4 above.

You've turned in the completed manuscript; PocketBooks has, after ninety days, asked for revisions; you've made the revisions and returned the manuscript; a further ninety days have passed with no word from PocketBooks; you notify them as per 5(b), and they have an additional forty-five days to accept. That is a grand total of at least 225 days, or seven and one-half months, from the date of delivery. And, of course, if they still decide not to publish, you have to pay them back their advance immediately.

Clause 7(a): Publisher is authorized, in its sole discretion, to make any editorial changes, additions, deletions, abridgement and condensation whatsoever in the text of the Work, and is further authorized to title, sub-title, and change the title and the chapters of said Work, and such authorization shall extend to any reprinting of the same in any form. Publisher reserves the right to omit any part of the Work submitted by the Author and to request substitutions or additional material prior to publication, and Author agrees to make such revisions, substitutions, and alterations in the Work as Publisher may reasonably request.

This means exactly what it says: PocketBooks may, "in its sole discretion" add, subtract, delete, abridge, condense, and, in essence, substantially rewrite your book, change the title, change the chapters, etc. Don't be misled by the last line of the clause: "PocketBooks reserves the right...to request substitutions", but is not *required* to ask the author to make the changes. This clause should be totally unacceptable to any writer in her or his right mind.

Clause 9: Publish agrees to publish and commence distribution of the Work at its own expense during the period commencing ____ acceptance by the Publisher of the manuscript, but not later than ____ after such acceptance. Publication shall be in any edition Publisher elects.

In the contract before me, the blanks in this clause read "upon" and "two (2) years", respectively. The previous PocketBooks contract stipulated eighteen months between acceptance and publication. What this means is that, taking Clause 5(a) and (b) into account, it can be three years before your completed book sees publication. And in view of the option clauses, discussed below, this can be a desperately long period of time.

Clause 17(b): If total royalties due and payable are less than Fifty Dollars ($50.00), the Publisher may defer the rendering of statements and payment until such regul-

payment date as at least the said sum shall be due and payable to the Author.

Section (a) of this clause gives PocketBooks five months in which to report sales and royalties from the previous semi-annual statement period. This is bad enough although present in the previous PocketBooks contract; what was not present was the $50.00 cut-off amount. In the previous contract, and standard with most contracts, is a $10.00 cut-off for royalty stement and payments. $50.00 may be birdfeathers to PocketBooks, but to a number of writers it represents the difference between water and milk. And, of course, they hold your $49.99 for what could be a total of eleven months without interest.

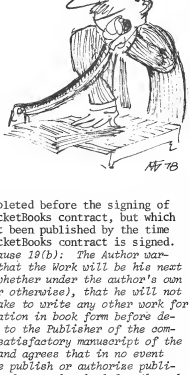
Clause 18: Publisher shall have the exclusive option to acquire upon mutually agreeable terms the publishing rights to the next (i.e., written after the Work hereunder) full-length work written by the Author until sixty (60)days after submission of the manuscript for such next work or sixty (60) days after the publication of the Work hereunder, whichever is later. (Emphasis added.) During the period of this option the Author agrees not to submit the said next work to other publishers, nor to seek offers from or negotiate with others, directly or indirectly, with respect thereto. If Publisher wishes to publish the said next work, the parties shall negotiate in good faith the terms of a publishing agreement. If the parties are unable to reach agreement before the expiration of the option herein granted, then the Author shall be free to offer the next work to others, but only on terms more favorable than those offered by the Publisher(, and Publisher shall retain the option to publish the next work on terms no less favorable than those offered by any other publisher.)

If you're fond of indentured servitude, this is your clause. What this clause calls for is an option on the completed manuscript (not portion, not outline, not proposal) of your next book, and PocketBooks has sixty days after submission of said manuscript or after publication of the original work, whichever is later, to accept or reject the next book. Take the figures I've listed in connection with Clause 9: you've three years and some months of the completion of the contracted work in which in which you must write a full novel entirely on spec, without payment of any sort, with no guarantee that the second book will be accepted by PocketBooks, and during such three-year-plus period, you may not even discuss the possibility of selling your next book elsewhere. In the contract before me, the last line bracketed above was lined out, and I'm not sure whether this will be a standard deletion or not. In any event, it means if PocketBooks rejects your next book, and another publisher offers you more for it, PocketBooks has the right to offer you the same amount, and you'd have to sell the book to PocketBooks.

The option clause also extends to:

Clause 19(a): During the term of this agreement the Author agrees not to write or participate in writing nor publish nor authorize publication of any other book-length work upon the same subject matter as the Work which would be competitive with the Work without the prior written consent of Publisher.

The phrase to watch here is "same subject matter", which could conceivably be stretched to include "any science-fiction (or mystery or western, or gothic, or etc.) book"---including one which may have been sold



or completed before the signing of the PocketBooks contract, but which has not been published by the time the PocketBooks contract is signed.

Clause 19(b): The Author warrants that the Work will be his next book (whether under the author's own name or otherwise), that he will not undertake to write any other work for publication in book form before delivery to the Publisher of the complete satisfactory manuscript of the Work, and agrees that in no event will he publish or authorize publication of any other book-length work of which he is an author or co-author until six months after publication of the Work. The Author further agrees not to submit any full-length work or proposal therefore in any form to the Publisher or to any third party until he has delivered to the Publisher the complete satisfactory manuscript of the Work.

There are a number of objectionable things here. One is the lack of definition of "any other work for publication in book form", which could presumably include, for example, the sale of a short story or novella to a paperback or hardback original anthology. Second, the clause requires the author not to allow publications of *any other book-length work* until six months after publication of the contracted book ---including, presumably, a book previously written, as discussed above, or possibly even the reprint of an old book. Third, the author may not submit, to another publisher or even to PocketBooks, a second book or a proposal therefore, until after PocketBooks' acceptance of the first manuscript. During that long period between delivery and acceptance, you couldn't even offer PocketBooks a proposal for another book ---but you could, presumably, sit on your hands without breaching the contract. What this is asking a writer to do is mortgage his or her future to PocketBooks with no guarantee of any return.

Clause 21: Gives the Publisher the right to sue for third-party copyright infringement, at its own expense; allows the Author to become a party to the suit, with costs and recovery divided equally, and further:

If the Publisher does not bring such action, the Author may do so for any infringement at his own cost and money damages recovered by the Author for any infringement shall belong to the Author, except that money damages recovered on account of loss of Publisher's profits shall be divided equally between the Author and the Publisher.

Generally, in law, "damages" relates to actual loss of income from an infringement; loss of income generally relates to a decline in sales of books due to unfair competition by the infringer; decline in sales of books affects the profits of the Publisher. Therefore, if you undertake to prosecute somebody for infringing your copyright, pay all the costs yourself, and recover for damages, you still have to share what could amount to a fair part of the money with the Publisher, although, if the Publisher undertakes the suit alone and recovers, it keeps all the money for itself.

A section of Clause 22(a) reiterates the Author's pledge that s/he has *no prior agreement, commitment, or other arrangement, oral or written, to write or participate in writing any other book-length work and will enter into no such agreement until after delivery of the complete satisfactory manuscript of the Work hereunder* which is discussed above

in relation to the option clause, but is important if you succeed in getting the option clause struck, you may still get stuck by this one.

Clause 22(b): The Author hereby indemnifies and agrees to hold the Publisher, any seller of the Work and Publisher's licensees harmless from any damages, including reasonable attorney's fees, in connection with any claim, action, or proceeding inconsistent with or arising out of a breach of the Author's warranties, representations, and agreements herein contained...(emphasis added)

Clause 22(c): Publisher shall have the right to withhold its reasonable estimate of the total damages and expenses (including reasonable counsel fees) from sums otherwise payable to the Author pursuant to this or any other agreement between the Author and Publisher, and to apply such sums to payment of such damages and expenses.

This one is nifty. What it says is that if anyone so much as makes a claim against you because of your book, the publisher can withhold what it thinks is a reasonable amount for damages and expenses, from your royalties (with no interest) for an indefinite period of time, and that whether or not the claim is proven or not, valid or not, adjudicated or not, you, the author, are still liable for any costs incurred in defending against or defeating the claim. In most contracts you are liable for actual suits but not for mere claims. Here, however, if Joe Doakes of the Maryland Home for the Bewildered writes to PocketBooks claiming that your book, GREEN SLIME OF MARS, has violated his right to privacy, PocketBooks may determine (God knows how) that it will cost ten thousand dollars to defend against this claim. They immediately withhold your royalties and hire an attorney of their own choosing, who, two years later, at a cost of seven thousand dollars, settles the claim by proving that Mr. Doakes is a nut. You're out ten thousand for two years, and seven thousant total.

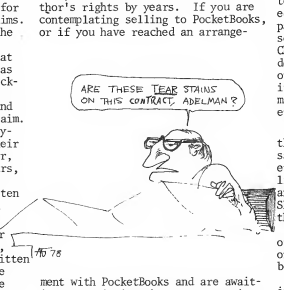
Clause 29(a) gives the author the right to assign the contract, but only with the publisher's written approval. Clause 29(b) gives the Publisher the right to assign the contract without the author's approval.

Perhaps the most typical clause appears as a rider (Clause 34) to the contract before me. On November 24, 1976 the United States of America obtained a consent decree against Addison-Wesley Publishing Company and twenty other named defendants, Simon & Shuster among them. The defendants were enjoined from illegally dividing the English-speaking market, obtaining a competitive edge over an English publisher in various ways, and imposing restrictive conditions on an author's negotiations with an English publisher. Clause 34 gives PocketBooks the exclusive right for three months in the open market, in direct contravention of the consent decree. In other words, PocketBooks is asking writers specifically to agree to, and become party to, a breach of the consent decree. That is, among other things, illegal.

The original PocketBooks contract gave the writer three months after the due-date in which to submit the completed manuscript. The new contract gives the writer thirty days.

What the contract doesn't provide for, among other things, is the author's right to review and approve the galleys, and the author's right to review and approve the copy-edited manuscript. The latter is something which, unfortunately, is still in limbo in current contracts, but the former has been an accepted contractual clause for quite a while. It is easy to overlook its absence in light of the other provisions of the contract.

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, these are the main objectionable points in the new PocketBooks contract, and without doubt some of you will find other clauses equally unsettling. If this contract is allowed to pass, we'll be seeing it from everyone else in the near future, and it will have set back author's rights by years. If you are contemplating selling to PocketBooks, or if you have reached an arrangement with PocketBooks and are awaiting or reviewing the contract, give this matter some serious thought. By signing this contract, you hurt not only yourself, but every other writer, and for an indefinite period of time.



---MARTA RANDALL

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REG COMMENT: I've learned from a reliable source that there has developed a writers and agents boycott of Pocket Books, and that Peter Mayer, president of Pocket Books has left the firm. All due to the new, unfair contract attempted by Pocket Books.

It isn't just the schlock, marginal, vanity publishers who attempt to rip-off writers. A close reading of any publisher's contract will show them eager to take huge percentages of subsidiary rights (their due, they think, because they are smart enough to recognize the worth of your book and are willing to publish you and probably make a profit off your work).

As dozens of authors in sf can attest, getting a true and prompt royalty statement from 'frontline' publishers can be difficult and often impossible. They control the bookkeeping, and what they say they sell and the reality of a book's sales is often widely different.

I don't think any publisher should ask or pay for any but very limited publishing rights. I think writers should sell each right separately.

Why should a hardback publisher get 50% of the pocketbook rights sale? Or 40% of the movie rights sale? Or similar percentages of foreign rights sales?

Frankly, I don't trust big or little commercial publishers. I've been screwed too many times. I no longer consider it a privilege to be fleeced. I no longer am willing to pay so high a price to be "accepted" by a professional publisher. I've paid my dues for twenty years and somehow the Writers Union of the Cheated seems too expensive. This does not mean I won't sell to a big or little commercial publisher, but it does mean there'll be a lot of marked-up contract clauses and dickering.

I don't CARE any more if I have the "prestige" of having sold to, say, Pocket Books...or Simon & Shuster. I want to write my novels, publish them myself in small editions, and offer them to the readership of SFR. I can live nicely this way, thank you.

After I publish my novels I will offer them to the "big" publishers, or even some small publishers who may be interested.

In many ways I'm in a unique position to do this--to go this route ---but if that's so I've earned it. And I'm enjoying it.

One further thought: sf magazines usually buy only First North American Serial Rights when they buy a story. And that story can be a novel. Why, then, do pocketbook publishers claim a share in all other rights to the same novel? Why isn't the profit they make from the softcover edition enough for them? The more I think about it the madder I get.

CONTINUED ON P. 28

SMALL PRESS NOTES

Let's start the parade with a self-published novel in paperback format, SAXON AND THE SORCERESS by John Turman. $2.50. Fair color painting cover by Mary Long, with an inside map of the alternate Earth involved.

I haven't but skimmed a bit, but can say the writing is of professional level and this is more than your sword & sorcery hackwork, in intellectual content. If you like to support the alternative press/small press movement, try this book: order from Turman, 11503 Pollyanna Av., Austin, TX 78753.

I remain amazed anew by the wealth and skill and dedication shown by film/comics fans...or aficianados. Here is a slick, heavy stock offset fanzine, OPHEMERA, priced at $4., with old film stills, and strips by Wally Wood and Al Bradford... Here is fiction and an undated interview with Billie Holiday... And here is a 68-page zine without a contents page, which it desperately needs. Obviously not for bookstore sale. No price on the cover. Order from the editor/publisher Robert Stewart, 202 Highland Av., #3, Somerville, MA 02143.

The trouble with this heavy-gloss-stock publishing philosophy is that the paper/cover-weight is Too Much in cost and importance than the text and art.

XENOPHILE #40 is out, and editor/publisher Nils Hardin is a dedicated fan publisher who has gotten himself into a work-like-a-slave-for-nothing routine who suffers too much if a few people ungratefully complain about cost-necessary increases in rates.

#40 is centered around "A Remembrance of Early Pulp Collecting and Fandom: 1938 - 1943" by Virginia Combs (Nanek) Anderson. The lady wrote to and was replied to by editors, publishers, artists, writers... and of course other fans and collectors. She quotes from the letters, comments, and creates an aura, a time-travel back to those almost forgotten days....[Including letters from the legendary Francis T. Laney, no less.]

Nils regularly produces must-have collectors items of XENOPHILE. This is another. $2. for #40, from XENOPHILE, P.O. Box 9660, Kirkwood Branch, St. Louis, MO 63122.

THE MANY WORLDS OF JACK VANCE & HORNS OF ELFLAND (combined) is an interesting magazine---combination of Vance stories illustrated by Steve Fabian and Rod Whigham (who is "good amateur") Here, too, comic strippage melds into sf and fantasy. And editor Robert Offutt Jr. is improving. "The Secret" by Vance is a short story first published here. This is issue #2, costs $3., is offset, 64 pages, from: 484-H White Oak, Pinson, AL 35126.

THE SCIENCE FICTION AND HEROIC FANTASY AUTHOR INDEX Compiled by Stuart W. Wells III.

A very valuable reference work is this. Specialized, of course, but very complete and with feautures and info you can't find anywhere else: like who wrote the ATTAR THE MERMAN series; who the FLASH GORDON novels published in 74-5 by Avon ; which well-known sf authors wrote the Planet of the Apes novelizations; who did the SPACE:1999 novels.... and so on.

Over 1000 authors covered, over 5000 separate titles. Quality large softcover, big easy-to-read-and-find type. Costs$9.95 in softcover, $15.95 in hardback, with 300 copies signed by the author and publisher at $21.95. [dealers write for discount info.] Address: Purple Unicorn Books, 4532 London Road, Duluth, MN 55804.

There has been launched an AUSTRAILIAN SF NEWS magazine. The first issue, June, 1978, bears a striking resemblance to LOCUS in layout and format. (Why not copy the best?) It is oriented to serve the Australian sf and f feader, and has the major USA and world sf news, too. Subs are the equivalent in US$ to A$5. for surface mail, or A$9. for air. Address: 305-307 Swanston St., Melbourne, 3000, Australia. [Published by Space Age Books.]

THE LAST MAGICIAN is a softcover collection of 9 David H. Keller WEIRD TALES stories. $5. From P.D. A. Enterprises, Box 8010, New Orleans, LA 70182. These are photo copies of the original WEIRD TALES pages, complete with original illustrations. Also an article by Keller on his half a century of writing, written in 1974. [More Keller collections are in the planning stages.]

SF & F 36 has a series of short interviews with the Nebula nominees: Gregory Benford, Terry Carr, David Gerrold, Richard Lupoff and Fred Pohl. Well done. A copy costs 75¢ from Jim Purviance, 13 West Summit Dr., Redwood City, CA 94062.

MIDWEST SIDE STORY, written and performed by members of the Minnesotta SF Society 'and the usual gang of idiots.'

'The play takes place in an alternate dimension...with some differences....Ben Bova has a slushpile reader; fanzine fans and convention fans are warring camps; and Minneapolis has actually gotten around to holding the 1973 Worldcon---and in 1973, at that.'

$2. from: Minnesota SF Society, Inc., POB 2128, Loop Station, Minneapolis, MN 55402.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN FABIAN

SFR: How old are you now? Where born? When did your artistic talent surface? Have you had formal training?

FABIAN: I was hoping you would not begin this interview with routine questions. I've reached the age where I don't care to discuss it. I'd just as soon we concentrate on the art of illustration and the publishing business in general. As far as art training--I'm self-taught which means I owe an awful lot to the Finlay-Bok-Cartier-Foster-Raymond-Hogarth-Eisner-Loomis-Rockwell-Parrish-Wyeth-Frazetta-Freas, etc. establishment. Getting started, that is published and encouraged is another matter. For that I owe fandom everything, and especially editors Seidman (Panshin)-Bowers-Geis-Bushyager-Hamilton-Wilson-Schiff-Van Hise and a bunch of others. Sol Cohen was the first pro publisher to encourage me to contribute to the pro mags, while Jim Baen was actually the first to publish my work in GALAXY.

SFR: We see a lot of your work in GALAXY and AMAZING and FANTASTIC and others, but not as yet (to my knowledge) ANALOG. Is there any particular reason why you haven't as yet appeared in ANALOG?

FABIAN: There may be two reasons. The first is the obvious one: Perhaps they may think my work is not suitable for ANALOG, for whatever reasons, and so they have not contacted me. On the other hand I have not as yet approached them for assignments either. Oddly enough, since I decided to go into profesional illustration on a full-time basis (1975) I have never solicited work assignments from anyone. All my professional and fanzine work has been and continues to be acquired by virtue of receiving mail and phone inquiries as to my availability to do an assignment. I simply don't need to look for work, it comes to me. Offhand you might think this is an ideal situation, but there is room for concern. I could be doing a lot of work (on a yearly basis) for low-paying markets now, whereas if I went out after higher paying markets I might be able to substantially increase my annual income. Last year my annaul income equalled that which I would have had if I had remained in the aerospace field, and so I find it difficult to drop specific clients who gave me my start in this business and go searching for higher paying assignments. Especially since my income this year will be a good bit higher than last year.

Right now I am content to go on with my present situation because higher paying markets are beginning to contact me as the months (and now years) go by. I still do not feel any pressure to go out to look for other assignments, and so if my work does not appear in any specific prozine, etc. it's probably because they didn't ask me.

SFR: Are you a full-time artist? What is your work day like?

FABIAN: Yes, I'm a full time artist though it seems strange to say that after 20 years in another field.

There is some variation to my work days, but more often than not it's an eight-hour day starting around 8:30 in the morning. At first I tried different hours to see which "shift" would be most productive for me. I know that some artists prefer the nighttime hours because of the quiet, and apparently their minds work better at night. I found the night shift disasterous. After working nights for a few weeks I finally realized I was accomplishing far less than when I worked during the daylight hours. I guess 20 years of factory hours from 8 to 5 have conditioned my mind and body to that part of the day for work.

I am usually in the midst of several projects at the same time, rearranging priorities as the days go by and as the phone calls and the mail comes in with new assignments, or if someone calls or writes pressing me to deliver sooner. Once I decide which assignment I'm going to persue on a given day I go ahead with it. Typically I handle a story assignment for, say GALAXY, this way: During the reading of the story I will have underlined and bracketed several descriptive passages and probable scenes for illustration. Assuming that the assignment requires a title page, a full page and a half page illustration, I have to decide

which scenes would best fit in these places. After that is decided upon I consider the nature and mood of the story, which will help me decide on which style to use for the illustration. Along with the style I'll also be thinking of which media to use, stipple paper, scratchboard, smooth stock for half-tone, etc. In making these decisions I must check what I've been doing in previous issues and on other assignments that will be in the same issue. I will look to avoid sameness in both the type of scenes I do and in the style and media I use. When these basic decisions are made I'll start with the title page by first making a few very rough basic line composition drawings on scrap paper. Selecting the best one, I'll use it as a guide to start the actual drawing for the title page.

When this is done I usually relax for a bit and consider how much inventive stuff I have to come up with regarding clothes, buildings, aliens, background, etc., etc. and of course I review the descriptive passages that I underlined in the manuscript. If I have to design something I may want to do a few brief sketches on scrap paper before working on the actual drawing. As you can see, doing an illustration is a continuous process of decision making. Actually it's all decisions. Where shall I put the light source? What angles and perspective should I adopt for the picture? What must I do to make it a science fiction picture if the scene is not obviously so? Should I consider the drawing with regards to selling it later? If so I can spend more time on it and design it for possible framing or matting. Virtually every line in a drawing is the result of a myriad of decisions. Education and practice make them appear in the right place on the paper; and experience makes the decisions come easier and easier.

Now, assuming that I am using stipple paper and have pencilled in the drawing, I will then proceed to ink in most lines and solid black areas. After that I "tone" it with a black color pencil. Looking over the light shade areas to make sure as best I can that every tiny dot, as thin as it is, is as black as I can make it so it doesn't get lost in reproduction. When the picture is done I clean it, then spray it with fixatif. Usually that's it for the day.

SFR: Do you go into New York to confer with art directors often? What is a typical session with an art director like? Can you give a specific instance and discuss a specific cover, for instance?

FABIAN: Last year (1977) I made about 5 trips to the N.Y. publishing offices, all to paperback publishers. I've not been to the magazine publishers yet. The reason for that has to do with general policy differences between the two. The paperbacks usually ask for some preliminary studies (at least one in full color) before deciding on a specific layout, so it's practical to visit them for discussions, though I have on occasion handled the whole thing by mail. But the magazines (GALAXY, AMAZING, FANTASTIC) don't require preliminary sketches, so it's not really practical to make the trip to their offices. By practical, I mean financially. The paperbacks pay something around $400 to $1000 for a cover, while AMAZING and FANTASTIC pay $50. There's not much sense in wasting a day talking to Sol Cohen about a cover idea at that price.

Actually, I work for Sol Cohen because he wrote to me just at a time when I most needed some kind of sign that I might be able to make it in the pros (back in 1974). He admitted to paying low rates, but he stated that sales and profit margins just don't allow for him paying higher rates. The point he made was that if I wanted to break into the pros, his magazine would provide the exposure I needed to get started. At that time it made sense to me and I was grateful. Let's face it, if he could, or wanted to pay higher rates, he wouldn't have to call me for art work. So, in a way there is a place in the pro marketplace for low-paying publishers. That's where novices like me get started. Of course it's not the best of all possible worlds, but most publishers who pay reasonable rates can be choosy about art work, and they are usually NOT the ones who "discover" new talent. It's the Sol Cohens of this world (whether his stated business-economics facts are true, or whether he's just plain cheap... and I don't really know which it is) and others like him, that provide a door into the pros that is the only way many writers and artists get the necessary work and exposure that's needed.

I wonder how many top name writers and artists practicing today went through a generation of low-paying (if they even received payment at all) assignments for the pulps, digests, etc. during the 40s and 50s, and how many would have cashed in early had they not been able to see print in AMAZING, WEIRD TALES, etc. etc. Probably quite a few. Seems to me every art form has a need for an "AMAZING" platform on which to get started.

I notice a common expression among top name entertainers today. They recall the numerous second-rate showplaces that they worked in way-back-then and admit that the difficulty today for aspiring stars is that "there's no place for them to be lousy". To put their act on stage and work it out in front of audiences, and refine it and perfect it.

In our field I suppose that fanzines (aside from AMAZING, FANTASTIC & GALAXY) play that role, or at least they did up until now. The big fanzines today seem to be strictly professional. SFR and ALGOL come to mind in that sense, and I don't really regard them as fanzines any more. Anyway, I'm glad there are places for me to be "lousy" in, and to polish up my act.

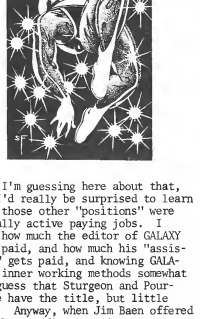
I've had no real first-hand experiences with art directors as yet. The times I've been to N.Y., to the paperbacks, I dealt directly with the publishers. Since they all admitted to minimal (if any) art training, it's not really a professional discussion at all. The four publishers I've been to, to date, rely on their own lay-judgement, or they call in their wives, secretaries, whoever else may be at hand to voice an opinion. It's kinda sad, but that's the way it is where I've been. Of the four publishers only Wollheim has rejected my work, so in terms of sales success I'm satisfied that things could be worse; they could all hire "experts" in which case I probably wouldn't sell a thing.

Wollheim, by the way, originally phoned me to ask if I'd be interested in doing a cover for Daw Books. Even though he later rejected my painting, he paid me for the effort. That's class, and it's encouraging to know that there are some good people in an otherwise shoddy business. I can't seem to get most of my work back from Pyramid (I understand they moved and didn't let me know), Zebra has lost my cover painting, Avon wanted to keep my originals until I made a fuss about it. (I understand that that particular director is no longer at Avon). AND so it goes...

SFR: Recent reports suggest that your Art Director position at GALAXY is one of title only and that you do not have any real decision-making power. Would you care to comment on that?

FABIAN: Yes! Your recent reports are correct. I'll ask J.J. to remove my name from that position on the contents page. I got my name

in that spot as a gesture of thanks from Jim Baen just before he left GALAXY. Jim was having problems getting artists to do work for GALAXY because of the payment situation and some artists were reacting with their own dirty tricks, like telling Jim they'd have the artwork in just before the deadline time and at the last minute telling him he can't have it unless payment comes on delivery. Anyway, I found myself doing some fast artwork in such moments of crisis, and Jim thought that one way to repay me for helping him was to have my name appear in GALAXY as art director, which might be of benefit to me in the future. As I look at my latest issue of GALAXY (Sept.'77) I see other titles such as Consulting Editor, Science Editor, etc. on GALAXY'S heading. I seriously doubt that the people whose names appear in those positions are getting paid or do anything in that capacity. Mind



you, I'm guessing here about that, but I'd really be surprised to learn that those other "positions" were actually active paying jobs. I know how much the editor of GALAXY gets paid, and how much his "assistant" gets paid, and knowing GALAXY'S inner working methods somewhat I'd guess that Sturgeon and Pournelle have the title, but little else. Anyway, when Jim Baen offered the art director title to me I felt it would be bad manners to turn it down. I also thought it was a pretty keen ego boost at the time, and I suppose I had another silly reason or two to say o.k. to the title. Anyway, Jim's gone, I've had my moment of fun with the title, so I guess it's time to drop it. Reminds me of a buddy I once had when I was in the Air Force. He'd buy all kinds of war-hero medals at the Army-Navy store and pin them on his uniform whenever he went out to "paint the town". I despise that kind of thing and now that I think about it, wearing titles at GALAXY isn't too far removed from wearing phony medals, so I'd like to shed it as soon as possible. Fact is, as soon as the first issue of GALAXY appeared with my name credited as Art Director, I got phone calls from people who wanted to congratulate me on getting the job, or from artists wanting to send me artwork to look at and to consider them for assignments from GALAXY. I told them it was an honorary title only, I had no power, no pay, no real "decision-making power" as Art Director, and I was immediately sorry I accepted it in the first place.

SFR: You do a lot of work in the small press areas--the Fantastic Nudes series, the Donald Grant books, and many others. Are these outlets more important to you financially and/or artistically, than the prozines?

FABIAN: That may be a little difficult to answer. First things first though. The prozines reach many thousands of people, probably 10 to 30 times as many as the small press products, so that in terms of longevity it is probably more important for me to count on the prozines to help perpetrate my professional art career. It seems logical to assume that if I can please the larger number of people I should receive the greater benefit. But it's a complicated world. The fact is that there are a great many more fanzines for which I do work as compared to the few prozines (GALAXY, AMAZING, FANTASTIC and GALILEO), and believe it or not many fanzines pay more for a full page interior illustration than the prozines. The fanzines also pay promptly, often in advance. The fanzines also treat the original art with greater respect and care. When I say fanzines, I include all the branches of that tree which includes every general SF fan mag right through to the specialized ones devoted to single authors and themes, right down to those that are comics oriented. There are hundreds of fanzines paying various rates, and as I've indicated, a fair amount of them have higher rates than the prozines, with seemingly a higher level of professional ethics. Of course, there are exceptions on both sides, but overall my dealings with fanzines is far more lucrative both financially and otherwise. I have never received a damaged drawing back from a fanzine after 10 years of contributing to fandom. I never have to hound the fan editors to get my work back when it is agreed that the artwork is to be returned. And, I get several free copies of the zine. In the prozines I must always be concerned with whether I'll get paid, I have to constantly remind the editors to return my work. I often get some artwork back damaged, and several pieces have been lost in the two years since I turned pro. One pro editor refuses to give me a free copy of his zines. If you are knowledgable about life in the prozines over the past 30 to 40 years, you must surely be aware that there is far more room for improvement in, than there is cause to be proud of, the treatment given artists and writers, by the lords of fantasy in the professional arena.

Artistically, the small house publishers provide a glorious field for self-expression, experimentation and outright freedom to do your own thing the way you want to do it. I must note here that I am not including pro-paperback publishers in this comparison, since you are specifically asking about pro-mags versus the small press.

Over the past few years the small press houses and quality fanzine publishers have been growing slowly but steadily in number. I have recently returned an assignment to AMAZING with a note saying, "Sorry, have to pass this one up, too busy this month". I was too busy with fanzine work and small press assignments to fit in the AMAZING piece. I guess that answers the question, except that I'm not likely to pass up pro-mag assignments often. I still believe that in the long run they are vital to my career.

SFR: You mentioned in a letter that you prefer not to do erotic drawings, yet your Fantastic Nudes series has been very successful. Would you care to explore this a bit? Do you make a distinction between essentially static nudes and the erotic? What does "erotic" mean to you?

FABIAN: My "preference" not to do erotic drawings means that I'd prefer to do drawings based on the traditional, imaginative aspects of science fiction and fantasy, rather than doing more "nudes". The "Fantastic Nudes" series were commissioned by the publisher, and after doing about 30 nudes in the past year I think that's enough. It's time for other projects and subjects Many of them will of course include the drawing of women, but I want to avoid doing more "Fantastic Nudes" for awhile at least.

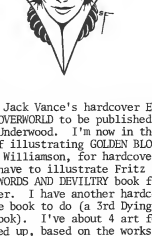
As for erotica, I think that any picture "motivated" to arouse you sexually can be called erotic. However, I don't generally classify

"nudes" in the erotic category when the point of the picture or sculpture is really anatomical beauty or artistic rendering. But I guess it's a personal thing really, since some folks do not (can't?) differentiate between the artist's motives and their own.

SFR: You mention a heavy work load (in a private letter). Could you give us an idea of the projects you have lined up?

FABIAN: Well, aside from regular assignments from AMAZING, FANTASTIC, and GALAXY, which take up about one week out of every month, I have several books to illustrate and several art folios to do, and quite a few private commissions for paintings and drawings.

I've just finished 16 full-page illos and painted a wraparound color



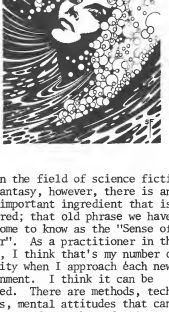
dj. for Jack Vance's hardcover EYES OF THE OVERWORLD to be published by Miller/Underwood. I'm now in the midst of illustrating GOLDEN BLOOD by Jack Williamson, for hardcover. Next I have to illustrate Fritz Leiber's SWORDS AND DEVILTRY book for hardcover. I have another hardcover Vance book to do (a 3rd Dying Earth book). I've about 4 art folios lined up, based on the works of HPL, C.A. Smith, R.E. Howard and a general fantasy type. I have about 5 commissioned paintings to do as well as a dozen individual black and white drawings for private individuals. Oh, and Stuart Schiff has just commissioned me to illustrate another hardcover book. Looking at my assignment board I also see a few "letterheads" promised. That's about it as of today (March, 1978).

SFR: What do you consider your greatest strengths and in which areas do you feel you need more skill?

FABIAN: Actually, I don't think in terms of strengths and weaknesses in my work though obviously in varying degrees, they exist in all artists. But in my case I really have not "mastered" anything as yet, so I approach each assignment as an opportunity to learn something, to practice something, hopefully to "invent" something that will advance me as an illustrator. If I'm lucky the story I'm assigned to illustrate may provide a lot of the basic ingredients like exciting scenes, good descriptions, interesting characters, etc. In my early association with science fiction and fantasy, as a reader only, I of course evolved a preferred list of authors that I liked to read and which I modified as time went on. I think I rated as best authors those who most excited me emotionally and intellectually. But now, since I have to illustrate many of the stories I read, I notice a change, an awakening to a new criteria that I use in my private ratings of writers. Visual conception. I am now much more aware of what the writer is visualizing as well as what he/she is "saying", feeling, and plotting. It has naturally made me much more critical of science fiction writers, though I try to keep my criticism to myself. Occasionally I'd let Jim Baen (editor at GALAXY until recently) know my opinions about a particular story, but even then I kept it down to very occasionally, since it's my business to illustrate and not to criticize.

At first whenever I read a story I had to illustrate and found at the end that the writer didn't "picture" a damned thing, not even basic character features, it was depressing. But then I decided that this lack of visualization frees me to create the characters and backgrounds to suit myself as long as I don't violate some obvious premise in the story. In such cases the time spent in research is small, leaving more time to be creatively arty, to experiment perhaps in some way with drawing materials and tools. From such undescriptive stories I have learned how to take the initial steps one has to take to become creative, and that ultimately, the illustrator cannot use a poor story as an excuse for a poor illustration.

But getting back to skills. I think it's important to realize that simply knowing how to draw is basic to being an illustrator. That seems obvious until you scan the vast field of art and delve into its practitioners. You will then realize that for many artists, learning to draw was too great an obstacle or task. Eventually they abandoned realistic drawing and went on to working in styles and media that didn't require all that knowledge, time and practice that goes into good drawing. Some even invented whole new schools of art to avoid it, and while I've read many an arty dissertation on the nature of various art movements, in my opinion it comes down to this: If you have in you a strong enough desire to be an artist you will be one, even if you eventually find that you can't draw very well. There are so many "kinds" of art that somewhere you'll find you have a knack of doing something well in some particular way. It may even be a new way and make you a genius, even though you can't draw for beans. But for an illustrator, I believe being able to draw well is the essential ingredient. I've tried to develop my skills, therefore, along those lines, and I hope that I'm improving with time and work.



In the field of science fiction and fantasy, however, there is another important ingredient that is required; that old phrase we have all come to know as the "Sense of Wonder". As a practitioner in this field, I think that's my number one priority when I approach each new assignment. I think it can be learned. There are methods, techniques, mental attitudes that can be developed to make a drawing produce that sense of wonder and as a student of science fiction art I pursue it. As for whether I can do "this" better than "that", I leave such analysis to others.

SFR: Do you have any opinions about the work of other sf and fantasy artists? Their strengths and weaknesses?

FABIAN: Some time ago in a fanzine (SFR?) letter column Jack Gaughan wrote, in essense, that one should not really try to evaluate an artist's work unless one knows something of the artist. Well, I don't know any of the current practicing

artists, though I once participated in a panel discussion at a convention where I did my share of talking on the subject of science fiction illustration, along with DiFate and Richard Powers. I can't remember much of what DiFate said, but Powers' remarks stand out in my mind because I found his attitude toward science fiction rather idiotic. The man considers the whole field of SF nothing but trash. All of it, past present and future, nothing but trash. He never reads it, not even for assignments. Now you tell me what sensible person condemns a whole field of literature on a platform of not even reading it, ever. He paints SF pictures because there is some money in it, but otherwise he has no interest in the subject and would not waste his time on it. So, whereas I once thought well of Powers' work, I have now altered my opinion somewhat and consider his artwork to be of little importance in the field of SF art and illustration. The main reason being that it has no honest thought or emotional connection with the field. He does not concern himself with SF per se at all when it comes to doing a painting. He spreads his paints on the canvas, arranges shapes that come to him spontaneously, reworking lines here or there to give impressions that are really related to nothing in particular. Occasionally a recognizable shape appears in his work, like a spaceship or a machine of sorts or a humanoid, but no doubt these objects are suggested to him by the publisher (editor) since Powers hasn't read the book and they are always done rather vaguely. The point is that his thought processes during the execution of a painting are totally occupied with colors, varieties of shapes and lines, unrelated to anything but the composition and the overall juxtaposition of the individual lines and shapes involved in the painting. Virtually no thinking takes place as regards the ingredients that we normally associate with science fiction. Universes, planets, moons, life forms, machines, robots, cities, structures, landscapes, androids, astronomical phenomenon, spaceships, aliens, humans, you name it and you can be sure Powers is probably unfamiliar with it.

So whatever it is that Powers does, it is NOT science fiction art. In my opinion it is abstract art, which is something else altogether. Mind you, at times it is attractive to the eye, works well as dj. art and has lots to commend it, but not as serious SF art. Somewhere recently I read a comment by a "knowledgeable" critic that Powers has risen ABOVE science fiction, that he has entered the world of fine arts. Well, Powers may be doing fine arts and doing it well, but I don't hold with this "rising ABOVE" business. It's more a matter of his not being able to rise up TO it. I don't think Powers has the knowledge, intelligence or proper attitude to be a good science fiction illustrator. Besides, the fine arts are above or below nothing. Science fiction illustration and art occupy the same common level as every other art form. Snobs create levels, but if they want to limit their knowledge and enjoyment, that's their problem.

Science fiction art requires an additional dimension from the artists. After they learn to draw and paint, they also need to invent and create scenes and things new to the human experience. And considering the infinite range of subject matter it is a challenge most artists can't meet. But, lucky for us, there are shortcuts. If you aren't prepared to read a novel (or even a short story for that matter) and extract details and search out the most pictorially inventive and attractive scene to illustrate, and then work out whatever new life forms, architecture, artifacts, landscapes are required, you can just forget all that work and go the arty way. Splash some colors, dab some blobs, whisk some lines and mix it all up so it looks weird, and maybe you can do the whole thing between 7 and 11 tonight. And if you know a publisher who likes that kind of work you got it made.

You know, it occurs to me that Powers may have been putting us all on, at that convention, with his "science fiction is nothing but junk" responses. If anyone out there in the reading audience was at the Playboy SF con at Great Gorge New Jersey in '76, and attended that panel discussion I refer to, please respond to the comments I've made here about Powers. Because if it was all a joke, I'd hate to keep thinking so poorly of the man, and obviously my criticism here would need alteration.

But I think I read Powers right. I used to think, in art there were two classes of human beings. The first has ideas, which it believes in fully perhaps, but alters to bring about "success". The other class has ideas which it believes in and must carry out absolutely, success or no success. The first class has a tremendous majority and they are all slaves. The second class are the only free people in the world. Now I realize there is another class--they have no ideas at all and they don't care.

Getting back to Jack though, I think he's right about publishing opinions. After all, things change according to the state we are in and it is seldom that our opinions remain fixed over a period of time. Opinions are like paintings in progress; as new information comes in, the brushstrokes alter the picture. I'd like to paint a nicer picture of Powers, but I need some new information.

SFR: Thank you, Steve.

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Note: the Fabian art on pages 26-27 is reprinted from 1969.

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ALIEN THOUGHT CONTINUED FROM P. 22

7-14-78 In the October FANTASTIC letter section, W. Paul Ganley, a long-time fantasy fan and publisher, suggests that other FANTASTIC readers help the magazines sales by moving the copies they find in local outlets from the (usually) bottom magazine shelf to the pocketbook racks. He did and found the mag sold every copy so moved.

This suggestion was welcomed by Ted White, editor, of course.

Trouble is the digest-size magazine format is too wide for most pb rack slots.

I've always wondered why the publishers of failing or ailing sf magazines don't go to 196 pages, a single column, and cut an inch of paper width from the right side. As if by magic they'd have a pocketbook! And their sales would probably double. If they could get pocketbook rack distribution.

I suggested this to Jim Baen years ago and he had good reasons for not suggesting it to the publishers of GALAXY. Yet the first thing he seems to have done at Ace was move to begin DESTINIES.

I'll be very interested to see if the "bookazine" concept will fly.

LETTER FROM FREDERICK BAILEY

June 19, 1978

'After recent frustrations with Ted White and Sol Cohen at Ultimate Publishing Company (AMAZING and FANTASTIC) in Flushing, New York, I turned for help to Mr. Joe Haldeman of the Science Fiction Writers of America. Mr. Haldeman graciously responded with a letter to Mr. Cohen, a copy of which I have enclosed. I was advised to communicate all this to you and a few other like magazines. I am doing that now by sending you this.

'OSWALD'S BACK ALLEY concerns an antiquarian author's search for the meaning of an equine haunting.

DELIVERED FROM EVIL concerns a man 143 years old who has survived nuclear fall-out.
THE DRONE OF WINGS concerns survival patterns of men stranded on a humid planet.
And FIREBALL is a long story concerning the time-travelling search of a present-day astronomer for the origins of a seemingly cursed meteorite.'

LETTER FROM JOE W. HALDEMAN, CHAIRMAN, GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE, THE SCIENCE FICTION WRITERS OF AMERICA

June 13, 1978

'Dear Mr. Cohen:

'This is to advise you that the following stories have been withdrawn from consideration at your magazines:

OSWALD'S BACK ALLEY
DELIVERED FROM EVIL
THE DRONE OF WINGS
FIREBALL

'The author, Frederick Bailey, remarks that Ted White has refused to answer several letters inquiring as to the fate of these stories. As far as I know, this is an experience he shares with everyone who has ever attempted to correspond with Mr. White on such matters.

'It would be well to advise Mr. White that these titles have been withdrawn, and make sure that he has not accidentally scheduled one of them. As you must know, at least once in the past Mr. White printed a story some months after it had been withdrawn, and after it had been sold to a rival magazine. This is unfair to the other magazines, as well as to the author.'

((This is just the latest surfacing of the Ted White Problem at AMAZING and FANTASTIC. I'm sorry to have to publish these letters, but writere should be aware of the situation. Ted White's policy of apparently not answering queries from writers and not keeping a coherent file of all stories is self-defeating; he scares away a lot of good writers who might send him something if they could be sure they'd be treated with common professional courtesy.

((If Ted cannot or will not do the job, perhaps he should step aside.))

CARD FROM JOHN BRUNNER

4 July 78

'What is this crazy American obsession with pharmaceutical drugs? Arne C. Eastman wants hypodermics and Nembutol (is the spelling different your side of the water, or is it a mistake?) to put down injured cats and dogs. At $5 for euthanising he would do better to buy a pair of canvas gloves and a bucket to put warm water in. At blood-heat that's a merciful way out for most.

'You're being the MM again. In my column 1 wrote "fortunately the pain had started to work through". You turned it into "unfortunately." Geis.... !'

((No, please don't tag me a Meddling Moron. That was a simple mental glitch-type tyop....er, typo. Much apology. I cannot blame my invaluable Lady Companion typist, either, since I recall typing your column myself.))

LETTER FROM PERRY A. CHAPDELAINE

Rt. 4, Box 137
Franklin, Tennessee 37064
Phone (615) 646-3757

July 15, 1978

'I am surely impressed with the professional aspect of SFR, which has improved considerably since 1 last commented in '76, but in detail in '70. Congratulations!

'I only express one beef, a thing which was probably unavoidable, but should be corrected. On page 48 Elton T. Elliott states that Robert Moore Williams "died recently".

'Not so! My good friend Robert Moore Williams died in February, 1977. I spent one and a half years writing here, there and elsewhere -- fans, editors, agents, friends -- attempting to find Bob, as his letters were sadly missed by me. At last a query slipped through to Susan Williams Manolakos in Syracuse, New York, Bob's daughter and heir to his massive works. Bob had died about the time his last notes had come to me. He'd joined a religious commune of probably a Buddhist nature outside of Phoenix, Arizona, and while there, apparently had a massive brain hemorrhage. By the time his daughter, Susan, arrived at the hospital, Bob probably did not know his daughter was present.

'I can tolerate his dying, your dying, or my death. I cannot tolerate the way Bob just went, without my knowing, or being able to ease his way. Bob was paranoid, nasty-writing, out-spoken, and more, but he was also my very good, long time, and trusted friend. So far as his so-called negative characteristics were concerned, I knew Bob closely enough to know that many were brought about by others who were even more paranoid, self-serving, and nasty-writing.

'But I'm not excusing Bob, any more than I would try to excuse myself for stupid things done in life. I am trying to say in my own very limited manner that I had fans, writers, editors, agents, and publishers been somewhat more pleasant to Bob, he'd probably not have developed some of those negative characteristics. Anyway, it was never Bob's way to view life as a personality contest to be won by those who can collect the most fandom egoboo, kiss the most editorial asses, or organize into the fanciest self-backslapping vanity unions. Unfortunately for me (but probably fortunately for Bob) I tended to acquire some of the characteristics of those I felt impugned, Bob Williams being one, John Campbell another, and some still living that shall yet be unnamed.

'There is much about Bob's writings that needs researched by fandom. I'm terribly sorry that Bob did not receive egoboo credits while he was living. That alone might have staved off some of his terrible loneliness. But now that he is dead, please, let us not write off his death by quoting CONQUEST OF THE SPACE SEA, THE LUNAR EYE and ZANTHOR AT TRIP'S END, "among others".

'Even now his daughter is having difficulty piecing together -- for example -- just his many pen-names. Bob wanted to be a hack writer. He grew up during the golden era of pulps and with gladdened heart and full consciousness, dived into the field, and became one of the alltime greats in his chosen profession. Irvin Koch once long ago said it best. Paraphrasing, Irv described Bob's works as many pieces that contained the germs of ideas that other writers picked up and carried

through into longer, more professionally (literary) written stories and thereafter was acclaimed for having invented the ideas. While Isaac Asimov is not a close comparison to Bob Williams' level, there is a parallel in the stimulation that John W. Campbell freely gave away to Isaac during Isaac's training period, and the credit that Isaac now receives for John's ideas.

'In like manner it was often the same for Bob. His ideas stimulated others.

'I wonder how many know that often AMAZING was virtually filled with Robert Moore Williams, penname after pen-name?

'I wonder how many know that Robert Moore Williams could probably be credited with the first SF piece in a high school literature book?

'And while SFWA carried on its staunch battle against AMAZING's liberal republication of older stories, without author permission, who was it that quietly got to Ray Palmer Hamling and Davis, and had them write down and sign for him what was their legal intent when purchasing stories? Robert Moore Williams.

'I know of no other SF writer whose biography sold under the title of science fiction, in LOVE IS FOREVER, WE ARE FOR TONIGHT, one of the most moving pieces I've read in years -- probably because I knew so much of it personally.

'Then watch who brags about the most republished short story! For a long, long time I'd bet that Robert Moore Williams led the list, at least until Isaac Asimov caught up. The name I've forgotten, but it was a Robot love story. ("Robot's Return"?)

'Bob had credits in the TV productions, SUGARFOOT and RAWHIDE, and could have continued had he not objected to agents (producers) writing their own scripts and pretending that their office concubines were the actual writers.

'As a matter of interest, although we may very well be able to reconstruct, Bob's many SF pseudonames, it is highly doubtful that the pseudonames used in Westerns will ever be fully known. If anyone thinks they can do so, Bob's daughter would sure appreciate same and I'll gladly put them in quick touch with her.

'Bob was a hack writer in the cheap penny (ha'penny) market by choice, by profession, by love, by success. But that doesn't mean that all of his writings were poor literature. And he ranged from ANALOG through many, many other things, including, as has been said, probably the very first SF piece to receive acknowledgement in a high school literature book. (Also "Robot's Return"?)

'During Bob's later years, during the late sixties and early seventies, and especially when the now defunct New Wave was rolling away SF, changing it into Speculative Fiction, or whatever, many fans, writiers, and editors jumped on the in-group bandwagon, and Bob's writing form and skill was wrongly criticized. Had there been just a smidgin of Christian understanding in this Christian community, I believe that Bob's last years on this planet might have been easier for him. The SF fandom community owes it to Bob, and themselves, to dig into his massive works and for once recognize that Bob was indeed one of the early giants that later snotnoses rode high upon.

'What I have just written is my opinion, only.'

((Thank you, Perry, for giving us the benefit of your special knowledge of Robert Moore Williams, and his writing.))

LETTER FROM DAVID A. TRUESDALE

July 12, 1978

'From Bob Bloch's postcard in #26 it would seem that while he and at least several others believe Ray Palmer's tongue was planted deeply in cheek concerning the entire UFO and Shaver Mystery (Arthur Tofte of Milwaukee, for one, a reliable source has told me), it seems incredible to me that a man as intelligent as Ray would base his entire professional life/career on the perpetuation of an obvious hoax he in no way truly believed. Do you really believe Ray Palmer was the sort of person that thought of the world in such a way that he had nothing better to do than play private jokes on it? Was Ray Palmer's pro UFO and Shaver Mystery nothing but his own perhaps spiteful joke on us and the world at large? Was he snubbing his nose at all of us in making -- at least some of us, and I don't include myself in this category -- believe what was in reality, at least to him, an out and out absurdity?

'If so, it's too bad he had nothing better with which to occupy his time. At worst, he had me convinced that he believed in what he was saying, even though I in no way did. But then again, I hardly knew him. Maybe Bob Bloch and some of the other remaining Milwaukee Fictioneers can shed some light on Ray's motivations, whereas I, as a fresh-scrubbed newcomer to Ray's ways, had to take him on face value.'

LETTER FROM SAM J. LUNDWALL

14th June, 1978

'Just a brief response to John-Henri Holmberg's letter in SFR/25, in which he tries to make you all believe that my publishing company, Delta, is much smaller than it is. I wouldn't mind one or two misinformed letters like that one, but Holmberg has been spreading this sort of thing almost everywhere lately and I am getting tired of it. He ways that Delta publishes 15-16 SF books a year, plus a bi-monthly SF magazine, subscription only. This is not true. Delta publishes at the moment 3 books a month (will go up to 4 books a month next year) which certainly is much more than 15-16 books a year. At the moment we publish some 50 books a year, some 35-40 of which are SF. Our magazine, JULES VERNE-MAGASINET (Which is the Swedish edition of F&SF) is sold through book stores etc. etc., and of course also on subscription. Incidentally, we will launch a second SF magazine next year.

'Delta is by far the largest SF publisher in Scandinavia, publishing more SF annually than all other Scandinavian publishers put together. Holmberg and a couple of friends are now trying to launch a small publishing company, and it would be in their interest to appear like bigger and important than they really are.

'Incidentally, when describing his great deeds as editor of the Askild & Karnekull SF series, he forgot to tell you that he was not the editor of that series. I was. After I had left Askild & Karnekull to launch Delta, Holmberg did a brief stint as assistant to the new SF editor (handling the addressograph for the mail order business), but that was all.

'Never trust Swedish fans who are trying to fight their way into prodom.'

CONTINUED ON P. 40

THE ALTER-EGO VIEWPOINT

Geis! Get out of the gardens and into the house! I need you to kibbitz during my reviewing.

"Can't do it, Alter. I've got to save the carrots from the crab grass!"

You leave that crab grass alone! they're distant cousins of my species!

"Then tell them to stop this outrageous aggression! It's kill or be killed, Alter, and I've got the hoe!"

Selfish bastard. Alright, I'll review alone. No Geis on hand to mitigate and soften my views. 'Kill' he says, eh? Kill it will be!

John Boyd, in his introduction to the Penguin softcover editions of his three myth-inspired sf books, says of THE LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH that he wrote it hoping to sound echoes in the racial memory of readers.

What he produced is a well-done (especially the first four-fifths) dystopia sf novel of a future, rigid, class society based on profession and socialism. The formula happy ending for the hero and heroine (and promised for Earth)is hackneyed and contemptible.

Since he admits changing the elements of the myths he used in the making of his novels, I fail to see the point (perhaps the pretentious point) in bringing in myths in the first place. EVERY WRITER uses myth structure. The most common story plots and formulas are myth-based. So what? Big fucking deal!

Boyd is very good when he writes with a straight face. When he "indulges" in obvious satire he loses credibility and becomes a preacher.

The three books in this "trilogy" are THE LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH (Penguin, $1.95), THE RAKEHELLS OF HEAVEN (Penquin, $1.95), and THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN (Penguin, $1.95).

St. Martin's Press likes the old reliable plots, too: WAITERS ON THE DANCE by Julian Jay Savarin (one of a projected trilogy) is about how Jael Adaamm and his wife Evahnna come to Terra way-back-when and established Atlantis.... And it ends, sort of, with a space wanderer named Yesul Chri'istl.

The book is due out in October and costs $8.95. Savarin is a plodder.

Harpers has indulged itself in a future psi-suspense-secret agent type novel by Michael Conner: I AM NOT THE OTHER HOUDINI. It keeps you awake and entertained and involved. It is cynical about government and etc as is the current crop of writers (thank God). It reads a bit disjointed, but that's okay. Buy the paperback whenever. The hardcover costs $9.95.

You might think a new novel by Richard Matheson, published by Putnam's ($8.95) titled WHAT DREAMS MAY COME would be a major event. You may be wrong. It is a fictionalized display of past and current speculation and assertion by occultists, psychics, and etc. on what happens to your "soul" when and after you die.

Story of a man killed in an auto accident and his after-death efforts to contact and console and help his wife and family. It is persuasive, alluring and seductive. Especially for anyone over fifty.

It rationalizes most of after-death religious belief. It is also disciplined and moral. Good book. It'll make you think twice.

VOLUPTUARIES ($8.95, Putnam's) by Betty Ullman, is in the gothic-horror sub-sub genre created by ROSEMARY'S BABY In this a girl is "captured" by a group of amoral sensation seekers, wealthy, who keep her captive in an incredible office/apartment building in Washington, D.C. The last third of the book is gripping, though hard to swallow. And, too, the girl seems too too gullible and long-suffering and masochistic. The horrors at the end are perhaps unfilmable, if a movie sale is expected. On the other hand, the way things are going....

THE INCORRIGIBLES (Exposition, $10.00) by Harold McGowan, is quasi-fiction which asserts that humans are the descendants of criminals shipped here from Rigel.

McGowan has written and caused to be published five other books. I think he's an intelligent nut.

"Okay, Alter, I'm through gardening for today. I can help you... help... An 'intelligent nut?'"

Of course, Geis! The intelligent ones are the most interesting, because they bring so much cunning and ingenuity to their nuttiness. Take you, for instance---

"We will not take me. We will call it an issue and try to read more books for next issue."

I keep telling you, you can't write novels, write columns, put out REG and SFR and still expect to do a lot of reading. Let the Other Voices do that.

"Well...."

Don't cry, Geis. You're not much of a reviewer anyway.

DREAMSNAKE
By Vonda McIntyre
Houghton Mifflin, $8.95, 1978.

Reviewed by Orson Scott Card

WHY DREAMSNAKE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK OF FEMINIST SCIENCE FICTION PRECISELY BECAUSE IT IS NOT FEMINIST SCIENCE FICTION AT ALL---

When I heard that Vonda McIntyre had added to "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" to create the novel DREAMSNAKE I was appalled. The story was a gem perfectly polished. All that could be accomplished by adding to it was to remove the shine and add dross.

That was why I bought the book with trepidation and let it sit reproachfully on my desk for two months before I read it. I couldn't bear to have my vision of Snake and her world ruined by a clumsy attempt to capitalize on the stunning success of the story. Sure, novels make no money; but is there no Purity in Art?

I need not have feared. Vonda McIntyre's instincts were correct. There was more to tell about Snake than the story had led me to believe. That does not mean that the novel is not immune from the problems of expansion, of course. There are interminable incidents that have more in common with the Lone Ranger than with good novel writing: Snake, the lonely healer, enters people's lives and makes them better because of the love and understanding she has to offer. Snakes instead of silver bullets, of course, but she saves little Melissa from the cruel child-molesting horse trainer who has been exploiting her; she immunizes the desert scavengers against lockjaw; she cures the sex problems of young Gabriel, who had the hideous problem of being unable to control his own reproductive powers and had impregnated a twelve-year-girl once with terrible consequences.

But the superficially episodic story actually does tie together well. This is not an incipient TV series. It is more of a picaresque, a quest from which the hero (damn the feminizations, full speed ahead) is constantly sidetracked and on which she finally finds herself. Snake is not just a bringer of sweetness and light. Her quest is to replace the dreamsnake she killed; instead, she finds not only a whole nest of them, enough to license a whole new crop of healers, but also the secret to their reproduction, so that the supply will never be exhausted again.

And the dangers are created well. A crazy who ransacks her camp, steals her diary, assaults her to steal her serpents, and finally nearly betrays her to death makes not just a good villain, but an extremely interesting character in his own right. Indeed, that is McIntyre's greatest strength--her characters do come to life well and are reasonably different from each other without becoming obvious archetypes.

The character of Snake, however, is the reason this book succeeds in doing something that in my opinion Tiptree and Russ have both failed at: bringing off a viable female protagonist. Indeed, by deliberately not being feminist, McIntyre has created a world in which sex really doesn't matter. Occupations are easily held by members of either sex. Of course, she is occasionally cute about it: Both the character of Grum and a later guard are deliberately described in terms that stereotypically would make them seem male, leaving us to discover that they are women with a slight jar later on in the story. But cuteness aside, McIntyre achieved the acid test: her protagonist was self-sufficient.

Imagine, if you will, THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS if Heinlein had brought in a race of aliens to rescue the moondwellers at the last minute. Imagine how successful the Foundation trilogy would have been if Seldon had actually intervened and saved Terminus at every crisis, instead of relying on individuals to make the right connections and pass through the Seldon crisis without aid. Picture, if you will, the limp effect WHITE LOTUS would have had if Hersey had brought in some outside nation to save the anglos in China, instead of having them fight to save themselves.

And yet--there I was, while Snake was caught in a pit of dreamsnakes, panting to have her boyfriend Arevin, come up on his horse and rescue her.

Why? Truly I am not such a fool as to honestly believe that women are incompetent--my experience has been quite the contrary. But it is such an inbred literary tradition that women are rescued that I still expected a rescue to be the finish. And no, I haven't read that many gothics.

McIntyre did that on purpose, too. She flashed to Arevin several times, always showing him on the trail, only slightly behind her, so that we would expect something to come of his quest for her. It reminded me of Jerry Colonna's mad chase in THE ROAD TO RIO; when everything was resolved without his cavalry troop arriving, he turned to the camera and said, roughly, "Didn't accomplish much, but it was thrilling, wasn't it?"

Yet there was no sense of letdown. Instead, it was exhilerating, exalting to have Snake find her own way out of her problems. Then Arevin arrived, in time to provide life-saving help, but after the worst of the crisis was over. Snake had been largely self-sufficient; but her friend was not useless, either. They needed each other, yet not to the degree that neither could survive without the other.

Which is why DREAMSNAKE has done more for the role of women in science fiction writing (as opposed to women among science fiction writers) than any other book I have read by a woman. She did not have to make men weak and stupid in order to make a woman (or women) seem strong and wise. She did not have to bring the "war between the sexes" to a ridiculous extreme. Instead, she cancelled the war and gave us a vicious but beautiful world in which people are people with little regard to differences between sex. Good and evil are not defined along sexual lines; rather they depend on the way people act.

The novel is not perfect, of course. There are inadvertently comic moments, as when the gatekeeper at Center behaved exactly like the gatekeeper at Emerald City in THE WIZARD OF OZ. I kept waiting for him to say, "Well, that's a horse of another color" or something. And McIntyre threw in plot bits that cried out to lead to something more: The entire episode with Center (do we feel a sequel coming on?); Gabriel, a great character who is built to a high point of reader involvement and simply dropped; North, who seemed to be the most interesting character in the book, but who was never adequately explained.

There were maudlin moments, too. Melissa's gooey sweetness (people treated like shit usually tend to become at least superficially shitty people, I've found--forgive me, those of you who believe otherwise) was unrelenting and difficult to identify with. Everybody finds a tender moment to thank the healer, too--servants, rulers, friends, enemies--everybody seems to touch her softly and say, "Thanks" Can't anybody show a little old-fashioned ingratitude? It is the dominant human reaction to kindness, isn't it? Or am I the only person who has ever run into ingratitude?

Yet the occasional maudlinness, the episodic plotting, the dropped plotlines were only mildly irritating. Because the book is a great yarn, with fascinating characters, and it takes the reader deeply into a world that, like all well-created worlds, is too real for the reader to really want to leave it. It is ugly--but so was Dune and so, for that matter, was much of Middle Earth. It is not beauty that wins a reader to an writer's created milieu, it is depth and interest and the sense of reality. McIntyre has a gift for making her fiction seem more real than my own setting (though there are those who would merely point out that I live in Salt Lake, which isn't the most real setting in the world, anyway); I did not want the book to end.

Now, if I could just figure out a way to turn my short stories into novels...

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PARALLEL BOTANY
By Leo Lionni, trans by Patrick Creagh
Alfred A. Knopf, N.Y., 1977, 181 pp. $12.95

Reviewed by Michael Gowan

PARALLEL BOTANY is a fantastic book. Leo Lionni, a painter and a writer has for the first time assembled a work that fully explores the fascinating world of "parallel botany". In it, he discusses the origins and morphology of "parallel" plants, and delves deeply into the folklore and history of them. In addition, each description is accompanied by Lionni's own elegant and accurately detailed drawings.

Obviously, Lionni draws from a profound knowledge of his subject, and he writes in a precise and scholarly style, adorning each page with gems of ineffable wit. What makes it even more fun is that the book is entirely a product of the author's imagination; it is a work of science that is an utter fiction.

But if it were only true! If only one could discover a specimen of the whistling tiril, or the labirintiana, whose leaves are veined with an impossible maze, with the specific ecological purpose of frustrating the insects which feed upon it. Where could one possibly locate a specimen of the "Woodland Tweezers", whose complex root system is based on a competition for space whose moves resemble the strategies of a game of Go? I have been through the deserts of Arizona, but nowhere have I come across the Protorbis. Perhaps it is because it is composed of a substance which superficially resembles stone. I may have climbed one, mistaking it for a mesa. It is said that they often are that large.

Yet, despite the specious nature of Lionni's text, there is a certain compelling air of reality about it. Surely, with such an original and forceful mind at work, the world "beyond the hedge" will overlap our everyday perceptions. He apprehends the world with the creativity of the scientist, and the methods of an artist. If that reversal of the usual statement concerning the work of the mind can be true, then other reversals are also possible. If Art imitates Nature, cannot Nature imitate Art?

I have yet to see a field of fossil tirils, erect in a matterless state of perfect preservation, but in my house, I believe I have an unblemished specimen of the Artisia candelabra. It closely resembles a piece of rococo bric-a-brac, and indeed, that is what I mistook it for, when I picked it up for a song at a flea-market, but it has roots which clearly connect it to the soil of abstract expressionism. Just so is PARALLEL BOTANY a cleanly forged link between Art and Science.

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STORMQUEEN!
By Marion Zimmer Bradley
Daw Books, #292, 364 pp.(UJ1381)
For June, 1978, $1.95

Reviewed by David A. Truesdale

This Darkover novel precedes all those written so far, and deals solely with the Darkovans before Terrans have arrived.

Aliciane is widowed and has one son named Donal. She is taken as Lord Mikhail Aldaran's mistress when it is found that his wife, Deonara can bear him no heir. Aliciane, amidst much agony and pain, dies while giving birth to the female child Dorilys---around whom a major part of the story revolves, and who is later named, because of her powerful laran (psi) abilities, the Storm Queen.

Eleven years following the thundering and stormy birth of Dorilys we begin the story of Allart Hastur, who, being sore vexed by his laran

ability to see many futures instead of just one, has taken exile in a monastery in order to master his frightening ability. His aging father arrives to remove him, ostensibly to wed his betrothed since childhood (Cassandra, chosen for her genetic traits), but once home Allart's father dies leaving the elder brother, Damon-Raphael, Lord of the Hastur Domain. He forces Allart to wed and bed Cassandra, in order to insure genetically bred heirs, but Allart has sworn never to do so, for he has sworn never to pass on his terrible power to any child.

Allart and Cassandra take a leave of absence in a Matrix Tower until they decide what they are to do. In the meantime, it is found that the child Dorilys has an unruly and deathly powerful laran, and a highly skilled Tower Monitor, Renata, is summoned to aid the child in controlling her awesome gift. Allart accompanies her to Dom Mikhail's castle, for he is to ask Lord Aldaran's neutrality in the war between the Hastur's and the Ridenow's. Aldaran agrees, but because of an inheritance feud with this brother, is about to war as well.

The bulk of the entire middle third of the book is taken up with illustrating all the troubles brought about because of the breeding program all the families adhere to -- the injustices to men and women as well when they are treated as breeding stock -- in order to insure and stabilize the various laran powers, which Dorilys, the Storm Queen, has evinced in powerful fashion.

Allart sums up the central problem of the book thusly, as "He wondered why there was so much revelry at a wedding, so much dancing and drinking -- in order that the sons and daughters of Hastur and Cassilda might forget they were being bred like stud-animals and brood-mares for the sake of the accursed laran that brought power to their line!" P. 77.

The final third of the book shows all the intrigues and plots for power come to a head, as Mikhail fights his brother Rakhal, who has joined forces with Allart's evil brother Damon-Raphael. Both Rakhal and Damon-Raphael die, Dorilys's powers grow so frighteningly out of control that she kills her half-brother and husband Donal with an unsought bolt of lightning -- and as she collapses into a coma from which she will never awaken, with all the electrical power the planet trapped and crackling out of control within her mind, destroying her -- Cassandra, Allart and Renata encase her in a timeless force-field that will keep her, and her deadly powers trapped in limbo forever. The closing chapters are tremendous; emotionally draining as well as mentally stimulating as Bradley takes us on an out-of-the-body mind journey to the very borders of the Otherworld. This makes up quite nicely for all the breastbeating and continual detailed maneuvering of plot and characters, although the detailing of the basics of matrix mechanics was welcomed indeed.

The prose is quite clear, crisp and powerful, and Bradley's arguments are logical and reasonable. She deals with the contemporary issues of genetic engineering, abortion, men and women as sex objects, what understanding, compassion and a call to reason can accomplish -- all against a backdrop of feudal intrigue and inheritance by a people who are struggling and groping to understand and control their powers of telepathy, telekinesis and other psi powers.

A very well done is to be given this thoughtful and detailed wonderment.

P.S. But, Marion Zimmer Bradley -- you must tell me why, after Allart tells his beautiful wife Cassandra that without total honesty they will have nothing, he fails to even so much as mention his brief affair with Renata. That hardly seems fair or honest, now does it?

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OUR LADY OF DARKNESS
By Fritz Leiber
Berkley Books, $1.75

Reviewed by Ray Faraday Nelson

The creation of a new species of monster is always an event worthy of celebration among aficionados of the bizarre. They have been, I suspect, partying non-stop since the first publication of OUR LADY OF DARKNESS in the F&SF January and February 1977 under the title, "The Pale Brown Thing", for this tale does indeed contain a worthy addition to our bestiary of Things that Go Bump in the Night.

Meet the "Scholar's Mistress", one of many "paramentals". Paramentals are a special sort of being that haunts only large cities; when the number of human minds brought together in one place reaches critical mass, weird creatures made half of thought and half of odd scraps of paper and bits of old books explode into the midnight streets, filled with a terrible strength they borrow from the sheer weight of all the buildings around them.

OUR LADY OF DARKNESS gains an added feeling of reality from its carefully researched background of California literary history. The strange lives and stranger deaths of that literary coterie that included Jack London, Ambrose Bierce, George Stewart and Clark Ashton Smith are given an "explanation" in terms of paramentals, leaving one half-suspecting that these San Francisco bohemians must have been toying with Things Man was not Meant to Know.

Of the recent flood of supernatural novels only a few will still be readable after the high-powered promotion dies down. I'll bet on OUR LADY OF DARKNESS and perhaps Anne Rice's INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE. Can you think of another?

****

JACK-IN-THE-BOX PLANET
By Robert Hoskins
Westminster Press, Feb. 1978, 155 pp
$7.95

Reviewed by Frederick Patten

The first third of this novel originally appeared in F&SF (April 1975) as "Pop Goes the Weasel". It was good enough that Lester Del Rey picked it for his fifth annual Best SF anthology. Hoskins has now completed the adventure, turning it into a smooth juvenile. Those of us who remember nostalgically the Winston juveniles of the '50s will feel at home with this one.

Willie is a teenager who has spent his entire life inside a tot-

ally automated house. The skeletons of his parents just outside the window indicate the mysterious disaster that destroyed his world. Willie has grown to hate being treated like a four-year-old by his inflexible robot nursemaid and major-domo. "Pop Goes the Weasel" tells of his trial-and-error attempts to escape his soft prison.

The new 106 pages relate Will's adventures as he seeks other survivors. His quest is complicated by an encounter with those who caused the planetary disaster. Hoskins develops the action with care; Will's predicaments are all plausibly solveable by using the expertise he worked out while outwitting his household computer.

Will is introduced as a likeable yet slightly repellant character. Since he's been treated as an infant all his life, the center of his universe, he has the egotism of a baby. He sulks and pouts whenever he doesn't get his own way immediately. The story mixes human interest with humor as Will meets other people and learns to relate to them in an emotionally mature manner -- though not without lapses.

JACK-IN-THE-BOX PLANET is light reading that all ages should enjoy. However, Westminster Press should be spanked for publishing it in a cheap plasticized cover similar to those "authorized TV novels" sold in toyshops for 79¢ or 98¢ each. For $7.95 the buyer has a right to expect something more durable, especially if the buyer is a library in need of a binding that will withstand the heavy usage that a good novel gets.

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THE SONORA MUTATION
By Albert J. Elias
Avon, 1978, 249 pp, $1.95

Reviewed by Dean R. Lambe

Take this plot ... please. Deadly brown heroin appears on the streets of New York and other Eastern cities. The junkies are dropping by the hundreds, by the thousands. The ghettos are aflame again -- pushers are being burned alive. The source of the deadly smack is pinpointed -- an isolated area of Mexico. But the newly-elected Mexican government refuses to cooperate, is in fact, cuddling up to the Russians. The U.S. President's in a real pickle; it's the Cuban missile crisis again, but with a nasty twist -- would Americans go to war to preserve the honor, the Health, of junkies? And two unlikely secret agents, a middle-aged NYC narc and a seedy, young botanist. Send said agents to Mexico on a "the Secretary will disavow any ... " mission, and watch the dramatic climax unfold. Now, imagine what a real writer would do with that plot. Look at what Elias has done with it... feel the tightening in your throat ... the queasiness in your stomach? Right. Nausea is never pleasant.

THE SONORA MUTATION is so poorly written that I really had to force myself beyond page three; and it's a shame, for Elias has a fertile, inventive imagination. The man simply can't write his way out of a paper bag. How else can one explain a President-Premier Hot Line conversation that feels dead-on, while all network newscaster reports read like they were written by a five-year-old. Can it be that Elias eavesdrops on the Hot Line, but never watches TV? Does this writer expect readers to identify with a protagonist named "Cone" and a botanist named "Buggsy"? Perhaps if the main character is viewed as being unstable when tipped over, then Cone's neurotic love-life makes sense after all.

Paper-thin characters aside, the premise of the novel is scientific nonsense. It's not even a mutation; it's a cross-pollinated hybridization, and one with a probability far lower than a between-the-eyes meteorite strike (poison ivy and poison poppy make it together ... how sexy can you get). And, the use of a spy-satellite laser to trigger the nuke warheads of missiles, while the nukes are inside a mine shaft, would have the Dr. Strangeloves in the Pentagon laughing for days.

With his previous, eminently forgettable THE BOWMAN TEST, Elias now has two strikes out of two, and there's no reason to await the third pitch. Granted, Avon has not labeled this botch SF, but like infants who put anything in their mouths, some SF fans will buy anything with "mutation" on the cover. Caveat emptor. What? Why did I buy it? Ah ... I was gonna review it, see ... besides, it had "mutation" on the cover.

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LORD FOUL'S BANE
By Stephen R. Donaldson
Ballantine/Del Rey Books
480 pages, $2.50 paperback

Reviewed by Neal Wilgus

I wish I could give this book the rave review I hoped to do when I started reading it but things didn't turn out that way. Don't get me wrong, LORD FOUL'S BANE is a good read, yes -- but, alas, it's not to rave about.

The first volume of a trilogy collectively called THE CHRONICLES OF THOMAS COVENANT THE UNBELIEVER, this book introduces the reader to Covenant and Covenant to the Land, the fantasy world where most of the story takes place. In the "real" world Covenant is a young writer whose life and career are ruined when he contracts leprosy, loses two fingers from one hand and becomes the "leper outcast unclean", living alone in bitter self-pity after his wife takes the baby and leaves. Involved in a minor accident, Covenant is somehow translated to the Land where he is mistaken for Berek Halfhand, the legendary leader from the Land's glorious past.

Covenant is the Unbeliever be-

cause he is convinced it is all a dream that he can't afford to take seriously. But in order to survive he is forced to play out his role, first as messenger from the evil Lord Foul to the Council of Lords in Revelstone many leagues away, and then as one of the leaders of the Quest -- a party of Lords and others who seek to attack Lord Foul's puppet, Drool Rockworm, in his evil stronghold in Kirin Threndor under Mount Thunder. The Land is a relatively primitive place so Covenant has to walk or ride horseback most of those leagues through a variety of mildly magical landscapes and minor misadventures, accompanied by such colorful characters as Atiaran, mother of a girl he rapes; the giant Saltheart Foamfollower; the immortal and sleepless Bloodguard; the rather unconvincing Lords Mhoram and Prothall; Lithe the horse lover and a number of others.

Donaldson has a flair for inventing unusual props such as the schmoo-like aliantha berries, the healing hurtloam, the never-consumed fire-stones called graveling and the Word of Warming, that yellow globe of energy blocking the bridge to Kiril Threndor in Darrell Sweet's cover painting. There are also a variety of other races/forces active in the Land such as evil urviles and cavewights, wandering Ravers and Wraiths, the Ramen and their wild superhorses called Ranyhyn -- as well as such miraculous weapons and symbols as Lord's fire, the Illearth Stone, the Staff of Law and Covenant's white-gold wedding band. And there's a map by Lynn K. Plagge and a Glossary at the end to keep it all straight. The question is, is it worth keeping straight and that probably depends on what Donaldson does with the two other books of the trilogy, THE ILLEARTH STONE and THE POWER THAT PRESERVES, both of which should be available as Del Rey paperbacks soon.

Considered on its own merits BANE has to be judged lacking in several respects. Donaldson's colorful inventions are impressive for awhile but as new wonders are piled on it all begins to seem arbitrary and make-believe -- something a fantasy writer especially can't afford since it is all make-believe. By using the anti-hero Covenant and avoiding the more cutesy Hobbit-type creatures in populating the Land, Donaldson probably hoped to avoid being passed off as imitation Tolkien, but unfortunately there remain too many similarities to Tolkien to be ignored. And perhaps it's picking nits, but villains named Lord Foul and Drool Rockworm are difficult to take very seriously.

Thomas Covenant is the only character of consequence in BANE and with his brooding seriousness and floundering struggle to find himself in the confusing world of the Land, he almost brings the whole thing off. Stephen R. Donaldson learned about leprosy during his formative years with his doctor-father in India and what he learned there has served him well here in invoking the hopeless feeling of the outcast, sharply contrasted with the magical fantasy embodied in the Land. But the story is slow moving to begin with and as Covenant meets crisis after crisis still struggling to resolve his own moral dilemmas, the feeling arises that you're driving with the brakes on or swimming upstream.

Despite a tendency to throw in flashy words like "catarrhally" and "chiaroscuro" from time to time, Donaldson is a better than average storyteller and stylist. He creates his own language and mythology, salts the text with just the right amount of blank verse and creates an overall atmosphere designed to induce the suspension of disbelief that's blocking your sense of wonder.

Whether his designs will succeed or not is up to you.

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IN HIS IMAGE: THE CLONING OF A MAN
By David Rorvik
Lippincott, $8.95

Reviewed by Ray Faraday Nelson

Is this book a hoax?

I don't know, and because I don't know I am forced to deal with it as a work of science fiction. Indeed, the author admits in the foreword that the details are "at considerable variance with reality". I have discussed IMAGE with Paul Segal, a cell biologist at the University of California, and he too does not know if Rorvik is pulling our collective leg. Segal assures me, however, that there is nothing impossible in the book, and that if a man has not yet been cloned, one may be cloned in the near future. All the research in IMAGE is authentic, and all the biological technology in the state of development Rorvik says it is.

So, as science fiction, does this story succeed?

I would say yes.

True, Rorvik's characters are made of cardboard, but a very good grade of cardboard. True, his settings are seldom described in enough detail to make me feel I am there, with the one exception of the experimenters' mysterious hospital in an unnamed "Third World Nation" which is so lovingly portrayed that I am sure it is a total fabrication. (If a man was cloned, he was more probably cloned somewhere in the San Francisco Bay area where Rorvik lives and where so much of the most advanced biological research is being done.) True, the plot is weakened by the narrator having no personal stake in the cloning.

But science fiction has rarely been strong on characterization, description or plot. IN HIS IMAGE is, if anything, a bit above the current state of art in these strictly literary values. If science fiction thrives while other genres die, it is because of something other than literary values. Science fiction and science fiction alone provides us with a way of trying on various futures for size.

It is here, as a kind of preview of coming distractions, that IN HIS IMAGE is so strong it would deserve a Hugo trophy or Nebula award, except that it is presented as fact.

The science in this science fiction is real science, not the shuck occultism of Castaneda or the jive time-travel of even such "hard" science fiction writers as Heinlein and Anderson. The vistas cloning opens up are real vistas, as are the vistas opened up by recombinant DNA and life extension

Rorvik has captured, in his carefully researched background, the letter of modern biology, and more important from a storytelling standpoint, he has captured the spirit, the fevered excitement of research on the growing edge of knowledge. He has captured the suspense of experiments where everything can go wrong and send you back to square one, experiments where thousands of highly-skilled man-hours and tens of thousands of dollars hang in the balance. I know some cell biologists personally. They are not totally logical walking computers like STAR TREK'S Mr. Spock. They are exhilerated, frantic, haunted individuals exactly like Rorvik's hero, Dr. Darwin.

So hoax or science fiction, IN HIS IMAGE is without doubt the most mentally stimulating book you are likely to read this year and, if you fear change, perhaps the most frightening.

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A SIGN OF THE TIMES:
SPLIT WOOD, NOT ATOMS
AT A NUCLEAR PROTEST

By George R.R. Martin

THE PERSISTENCE OF VISION (Quantum, $9.95) is John Varley's first short story collection, and anyone who needs more recommendation than that to go out and buy it just has not been following SF very closely these past few years.

The Seventies have been a particularly fertile decade for the emergence of new talents in the genre. Dozens of young writers have broken into print and begun to build reputations, and several of them -- Vonda N. McIntyre, Michael Bishop, Greg Benford and the late Tom Reamy -- have already established themselves as artists of the first magnitude. And John Varley is arguably the best and most important of the lot.

Varley's work did not appear in professional print until 1974, but since then he has rapidly been taking over the world. While he has yet to win a major award, he has already been a finalist more often than any other writer of his generation, his stories crashing on the Hugo and Nebula ballots each year in twos and threes. He has twice been a nominee for the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer, losing to P.J. Plauger in 1975 and to Reamy in 1976, and thereby becoming incontestably the Best New Writer Never to Win the John W. Campbell Award. He is a fixture in the various Best of the Year anthologies, frequently with more than one story, something few other authors have ever managed to accomplish. His first novel, THE OPHIUCHI HOTLINE, was a singularly impressive book-length debut, rich, inventive, complex and terribly ambitious. It drew mixed reviews and failed to make either the Hugo or Nebula ballots, but ten years from now it will probably be read and remembered when other, more-lauded-and-more-routine novels of 1977 are out of print and forgotten.

John Varley, in short, is Good. If you are not familiar with his work, you ought to be, at least if you want to maintain any pretense of keeping up with what is happening in contemporary SF.

This being established, the question immediately arises -- why is Varley good? What is he doing right? Why is he (arguably, as I've said) the best and most important new SF writer of the Seventies?

He certainly has competition for that laurel, much of it formidable, and Varley is still not the perfect writer. His prose style, for example, is smooth and competent, but seldom more than that. On a word-for-word basis, he seldom approaches the richness and eloquence so often displayed by the likes of Michael Bishop and Gardner Dozois. His characters are clearly drawn, but not really memorable; the protagonists in particular often seem to be cut from a single cloth. At their best, McIntyre, Reamy and Benford have all achieved depth of characterization that is still beyond Varley's grasp. In these areas, Varley's work probably warrants only that much overused left-handed compliment, "promising".

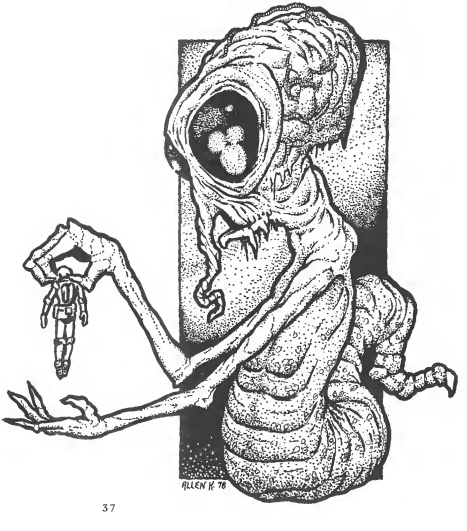
But in the realm of ideas, Varley has done more than simply promise. There he has delivered.

Science Fiction has long prided itself on being "a literature of ideas". This has been seen by some as a good thing, while others have criticized what is perceived as an emphasis on the intellectual to the exclusion of the emotional. But both sides in the debate have accepted as a given the proposition that SF is, indeed, rich in ideas.

Under close examination, however, that proposition rapidly begins to erode. Many of the grand ideas of the genre are forty or fifty or even a hundred years old. Many of the giants of the field have devoted entire careers to ringing changes on the same handful of basic concepts, carefully rationing whatever new contributions they cared to make. Really new ideas were few, and those not always well received.

Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the realm of "future history". Ever since the existence of Robert A. Heinlein's famous chart was first revealed by John W. Campbell, detailed "future history" scenarios have been beloved by readers and writers alike. The writers are reluctant to discard a carefully worked-out background, and the readers seem to enjoy the depth a future history can give to a body of work. Some also like to play the game of finding cross-references and contradictions.

Heinlein's own "Future History" was an odd duck among those that followed, a rather ramshackle construction where the connections from tale-to-tale were seldom evident to those without the chart. It was not Heinlein but Asimov who was to serve as the model for fashionable



future histories to come. In the Foundation series, Asimov established what Donald A. Wollheim calls (in his critical book THE UNIVERSE MAKERS) "the cosmogony of the future". His sequence of interstellar empire/fall/rebuilding would have endless variants rung on it by later writers, some of the twists more innovative than others, but the basics went unchallenged. Poul Anderson's Technic Civilization offered two falls for the price of one, Jerry Pournelle prefaced two empires with a CoDominium, Marion Zimmer Bradley pitted Darkover against a thriving empire while Harry Harrison set his Deathworlds after a fallen one, other writers of less imperial tastes substituted republics and federations; but it was hard to write a future history and not use something of what Asimov had set out. Even Ursula K. Le Guin fell in line; her Hainish books, with their League of All Worlds, its fall, and its transformation into the Ekumen, partake heavily of same ingredients.

Lest anyone accuse, I blush to admit that the background against which the majority of my own stories is set is as much a derivation as any of these others; hopefully original and interesting in parts, but still evolved from the same source, the same wellspring of old ideas.

John Varley, however, works with new ideas.

Therein lies his strength and the reason I insist that Varley is important as well as entertaining. It is no great thing to reject the "future history" concept entirely -- many of the young writers of the Sixties did just that, and the absence of a unifying background can even be seen as one of the characteristics of the New Wave of that period -- but to take that old, old literary tool and make something new and fresh of it is a major feat indeed. Varley did just that.

He was not the first, of course. Cordwainer Smith wove a tapestry that was uniquely his; Jack Vance toyed with several. But the revised and utterly new future history that Varley developed in his stories beginning in 1974 went further than either of them.

Anyone who has sampled any of Varley's fiction knows already what I'm talking about. For those who don't, PERSISTENCE OF VISION is a fine introduction to the Varley cosmos. Six of the nine stories in the collection are set against the common backdrop of Varley's Eight Worlds, which also provides the backdrop for his novel.

Those six stories alone probably contain more ideas than the entire corpus of work by the writers cataloged earlier; cloning, memory banks, routine sex changes, symbs, the Invaders, the Ophiuchi Hotline, disneylands, new arts, new moralities, new societies. Varley is not for those most comfortable with the old and familiar, nor those who cling to the maxim that one strangeness per story is enough.

Varley is an original. Even in the three stories that do not use his future history, he is strikingly fresh; it is hard to imagine anyone else coming up with the notion that forms the basis of the superb title novella, for example. But even beyond his originality, he has all the marks of a born storyteller. Despite the density of lopsided, weird ideas, Varley never stops to lecture, never bores; he is entertaining constantly, reliably.

John Varley's style and characterization might justly be called "promising", as I commented earlier; but to apply that same label to his work as a whole is patronizing in the extreme. The work is the only true measure, and in THE OPHIUCHI HOTLINE and this collection, Varley has already contributed more, accomplished more, than many of the gentle's old warhorses have done in a lifetime. If the work is not perfect, neither is it merely "promising". The truth is, Varley stepped beyond mere promise with his first published story.

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STRANGE WINE
By Harlan Ellison
Harper & Row, $9.95

Reviewed by Mark Mansell

Let there be no doubt about it, a new Ellison collection is an EVENT. Harlan Ellison is one of the best short fiction writers of our time, and this newest collection gives ample evidence of his talent. Ellison writes with immense force and emotion.

The cover is what first catches the eye. The dust jacket art is an arresting wrap-around painting by the Dillons, who have come to be associated with Ellison's work. They manage to catch the essence of Ellison's strange and fevered visions in their brushstrokes. This dust jacket is possibly the best work they've done.

Ellison's books are more than just a group of his stories slapped between two covers. They capture his personality. Lest readers miss the meanings of the stories, he adds an introduction to the book, and a preface to each story. The Introduction -- "Revealed at Last! What Killed the Dinosaurs! And You Don't Look So Terrific Yourself". -- is a dangerous vision more frightening than anything Ellison put into his two anthologies of that name. You will never again feel complacent about watching the boob tube.

Unlike the prior Ellison collection, DEATHBIRD STORIES, STRANGE WINE is compiled of not-previously-collected stories. There is no way to summarize an Ellison story -- they're so tightly interwoven within themselves that no summary can do them justice. I intend only to list them and label them as to whether light or dark in tone.

The collection gets off to a flying start with "Croatoan", Ellison's story about individual responsibility. It was a Hugo nominee and illustrated that aspect of Ellison's style which Richard Delap calls "the art of razorblade fiction". Reading it has the same effect as being repeatedly punched in the gut -- the reader is stunned and dizzied by its narrative force.

On the darker side, there are "Killing Bernstein", which deals with a man who kills his lover/boss and kills her, and kills her ...; "In Fear of K" is about a being which lives off a couple's mutual hatred. "Hitler Painted Roses" and "The Wine has been Left Open too Long and the Memory has Gone Flat" are about what people believe as opposed to what they really are, and the heat death of the universe as a means of relieving ennui, respectively.

The other dark stories are: "Lonely Women are the Vessels of Time", "Emissary from Hamelin", "Seeing", "The Boulevard of Broken Dreams", "Strange Wine", and "The Diagnosis of Dr. D'argueAngel". They cover such strange topics as women who relieve loneliness in a succubi fashion, the ghosts of dead Nazis wandering the streets of Manhattan, and being immunized against death by frequent innoculations of small portions of death.

So well-known are Ellison's tales of the unpleasant inner morasses of mankind, that his lighter tales tend to be forgotten. That is a shame, since Ellison's lighter stories have a cutting, ironic touch.

"Working with the Little People" was written for the F&SF Harlan Ellison issue. It tells about a writer who overcomes a writer's block with the aid of gremlins. "Mom" is about a man who is haunted by his Yiddish mother who tries to set him up with a nice Jewish girl. "From

A to Z, in the Chocolate Alphabet" is a series of 26 Frederic Brown-type short-shorts written in the window of the L.A. SF bookstore, A Change of Hobbit. "The New York Review of Bird" is the story of Cordwainer Bird's never-ending struggle for truth, justice and good writing.

There you are, 15 draughts of very strange wine, indeed. Through the years, Harlan Ellison continues to improve, never resting on his ample laurels. This book is a must-read.

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ANOTHER FINE MYTH...
By Robert Asprin
Norfolk, VA, Starblaze/Donning, 1978, illus., 159 pp., $4.95
Order from: The Donning Company, 253 W Bute St, Norfolk, VA 23510.
ISBN: 0-915442-54-X

CHARMED LIFE
By Diana Wynne Jones
New York, Greenwillow, 1978, 218 pp., $6.95
Order from: Greenwillow Books, 105 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016
IBSN: 0-688-80138-2

Reviewed by Frederick Patten

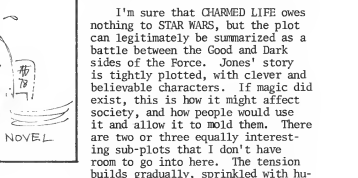
I'm reviewing these two titles together because I read them one after the other, and they make a good comparison in showing the diversity of fantasy fiction that's coming out today.

ANOTHER FINE MYTH... is one of the first four titles in Polly and Kelly Freas' new series of Starblaze Editions. It's an attractively illustrated quality-bound paperback. Freas' humorous cartoon cover accurately symbolizes the story, which is slapstick sword-and-sorcery.

Skeeve, a scrawny teenage barbarian sneak-thief, has gotten himself apprenticed to a hedge magician, Garkin. Garkin is murdered by a rival just after conjuring a demon, Aahz, to their dimension. Aahz, despite his scaly green skin and sharklike teeth, has the personality and chutzpah of a used-car dealer. Aahz becomes Skeeve's new mentor and the two go on a quest to destroy Garkin's arch-competitor before he can wipe them out, and to get Aahz back home.

The resulting series of misadventures is rather like a teamup between W.C. Fields and Dick Van Dyke in a landscape filled with cute baby dragons, ominous wizards, klutzy professional assassins, sultry tavern wenches, humble merchants who turn out to be disguised monsters of one sort or another, and bumbling knights in shining armor. What charm the novel has lies in its reasonably witty dialog, if the idea of a fast-talking demon with a Noo Yawk accent turns you on, and if you can believe in the incredible stupidity of everyone besides Aahz and Skeeve. The author (identified in the biographical blurb as an ex-Klingon) also packs the text with references to Darth Vader, Mandrake the Magician, Donal Graeme, Tevye, Laurel and Hardy and similar pop favorites.

ANOTHER FINE MYTH... reads like what Laser Books might have wanted if it had been interested in UNKNOWN WORLDS-type fantasy. If it were the price of an average paperback, I'd say, sure, it's a nice bit of light comedy. At $5.00, though, it seems too frothy to be worth the price, despite Freas' hilarious cover painting and funny interior sketches.



CHARMED LIFE is being marketed as a juvenile hardcover. That means you aren't likely to find it unless you visit the children's section of your library or a good hardcover bookstore. It's well worth the effort, though. Think of the quality of a Heinlein juvenile with a CONJURE WIFE-like plot, and you'll have an idea of the reading pleasure to be found here.

The setting is an alternate-dimension England, where magic is an integral part of society. Eric (Cat) Chant and his older sister Gwendolen, recently orphaned, are believed to show promise and are apprenticed to a local minor witch. Gwendolen is so talented that she soon becomes the village pet. Her fame spreads, and she (with Cat in her wake) are invited to England's top school for tutoring in Advanced Witchcraft. There Gwendolen is dismayed to find that she is only one of many gifted children. Her attention-getting pranks, which grow increasingly nasty, are casually shunted aside by the older students and staff.

Cat, watching quietly in the background, begins to notice that the others are not nearly as unconcerned by Gwendolen's mischief-making as they seem. She is being allowed to get away with much more than any of the other lively students. Gradually it seems that her bad temper may have more behind it than spoiled petulance. Cat finds clues hinting that the headmaster has had his eye on the Chants long before they were ostensibly brought to his attention; he may have knowledge about the real reason for their parents' death. Cat soon fears that Gwendolen is not as childishly unaware of the others' interest in her as she pretends, but that she is also playing a game of her own. As the maliciousness becomes more tangible, Cat frantically wonders who is really using whom? -- who is playing the deeper game? -- and why are both sides taking a surreptitious but desperate interest in him?

I'm sure that CHARMED LIFE owes nothing to STAR WARS, but the plot can legitimately be summarized as a battle between the Good and Dark sides of the Force. Jones' story is tightly plotted, with clever and believable characters. If magic did exist, this is how it might affect society, and how people would use it and allow it to mold them. There are two or three equally interesting sub-plots that I don't have room to go into here. The tension builds gradually, sprinkled with humor, until the final third of the book when things become desperately grim. As with CONJURE WIFE, the real climax isn't in the final chapter; it hits you by surprise a good bit earlier. If there were a Hugo category for Best Juvenile Fiction, CHARMED LIFE would certainly be one of my nominees (it was first published in England in 1977). And try to find Jones' earlier, excellent DOGSBODY, which seems to have gone totally unnoticed in the SF community.

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'A local school teacher advanced the theory that he was a yacht in the middle of a pond and was surrounded by rafts. And to survive he had to make himself look like a raft. He asked me whether I was a yacht or a raft. I told him I was a submarine.'

---R.S. Harding

CONTINUED FROM P. 30

7-20-78 With the rise of ISAAC ASIMOV'S SF MAGAZINE and the imminent appearance of NOVA, PULSAR and DESTINIES, plus many also-rans, the reign of "king of sf" may be ended for ANALOG.

Ben Bova has resigned, and the next editor will still be faced with the ghost of Campbell. Bova was a strong editor though not as eccentric and fierce as John W. Until ANALOG is lucky enough to acquire a singular personality...a unique combination of talents and character as editor, ANALOG will probably slowly be eclipsed and will settle down into a respectable dotage, gradually declining circulation...

As Ben Bova says in his interview this issue, Conde-Nast, the publishers, do not want to change ANALOG or change their attitude toward sf or their level of activity in the sf field. Stand pat.

They may feel that there will be a blow-off of the sf boom in a year or so, and most of ANALOG's competition will die off, leaving the magazine secure and pre-eminent as before.

It may work out that way. But as things stand now the sf field is now a continent, and whole sf civilizations have sprung up in the twinkling of an eye...or a STAR WARS.

LETTER FROM RONALD LAMBERT

July 6, 1978

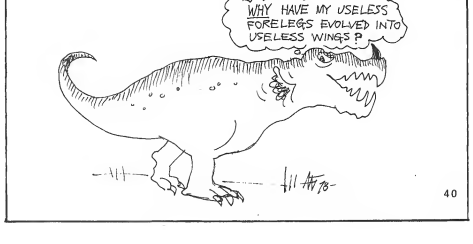
'By the way, is there any hope that I might yet get a chance to reply to John Chalmers in print? He caught me in one mistake that I would like to set straight, especially since my basic argument is still valid. My mistake was in misreading my source (THE GENESIS FLOOD, by John C. Whitcomb Jr. and Henry M. Morris, p. 375). I said there was too much tritium in the air to be accounted for by the present rate of formation, and what I should have said was that there is too much He^3. That is a radiogenic isotope of helium that is formed when the tritium undergoes beta decay (emitting a nuclear electron so that a neutron turns into a proton). Cosmic rays strike hydrogen atoms in water vapor and produce tritium, which in turn decays into He^3. The only possible explanation for the present overabundance of He^3 in the atmosphere is that prior to the Flood there was a water vapor canopy in earth's upper atmosphere. The H-bomb tests produced some tritium, but not enough, and anyway the measurements that discovered the He^3 overabundance were made in 1953, less than one half-life of tritium after the first H-bombs were detonated, so the tritium produced by H-bombs wouldn't have had time to degenerate into He^3 in large enough quantity to matter.

'As for the water vapor canopy being an ad hoc creation, I did not say that. The canopy was primordial, formed according to natural processes as the hot, molten primordial earth with steam in its atmosphere slowly cooled. Logically, this is the way that any earth-type planet should form. The present situation is obviously abnormal. The only way the canopy of water vapor could have been precipitated down was for dust particles to be introduced (a la Velikovsky, perhaps) to provide condensation nuclei for the formation of heavier-than-air droplets or flakes. Since water vapor in its dissociated, molecular form weighs only .6 as much as air, it would not "freeze out", because temperature does not affect weight and water vapor does not condense without something to condense on. Some of those clouds you see floating high up in the sky are water vapor at below zero degrees F.

'People keep getting the idea that creationists are invoking magic to explain the formation of the earth and everything else. That is not the case. While as one time God must have created the universe and set things in motion, since then He uses natural processes as far as the physical realm is concerned. But life is unnatural. It had to be specially created. This is a logical conclusion, because no natural processes are known to be able to create life. Evolutionists may speculate about primordial amino acid soups and lightning bolts (a la Frankenstein), but they have not succeeded in demonstrating that life can be created by such means. Creationists are not impressed by the invoking of millions of years of time to accomplish the impossible. To them that is merely invoking magic. Furthermore, the basic concept of simple oragnisms evolving into more complex ones by natural processes violates a known physical law, the second law of thermodynamics (entropy). How can natural processes, which are entropic, ever give rise to an anti-entropic process (evolution)? If biology is not subject to the law of entropy as some evolutionists claim, then it is the only thing in the universe that is not. Genetic mutation, which evolutionists point to as the mechanism of evolution, does not demonstrate any exemption from the law of entropy. Almost all mutations result in degeneration. Some are beneficial, like the mutation that causes a gypsy moth's wings to be dark colored in an area where there is industrial soot in the air, but that does not represent an increase in complexity of the organism, and besides, what we are calling a mutation in this case could be merely a matter of certain genes that were previously turned off by inhibitors becoming turned on again -- a possibility that would tend to blur the distinction between mutation and variation. There has never been a single documented case of a mutation that was clearly anti-entropic and resulted in an increase in complexity of the organism.

'I have to comment on a statement you made. You said that in your correspondence the creationist position was outvoted. I don't mean to be snide, but since when was the universe a democracy? Surely you don't believe that physical reality is determined by consensus of the majority. That would be vox populae vox Dei with a vengeance! Personally, I do not believe that the voice of the populace is the voice of God. I think vox populae VEX Dei is closer to the truth -- if you will pardon the English anachronism.

'I still hope that somebody will



perform the experiments I previously suggested that involve the use of pressurized terriariums.'

((Of course, Ron, I do not believe a quantity of opinions equals Truth. I jest reported you was not in the majority, thas all. Shucks and shit, man, don't read things ain't there.

((I get/got letters from the relevant scientists/sciences who seem to demolish your position and statements... Then you come along with a letter like this and I don't know which is what and tend, because of my rebellious nature and anti-authoritarian inclination, to side with you just for the hell of it and because Authorities have been gloriously wrong so often in the past.

((I expect to get a letter or two about how half-assed and wrong this letter of youre is.

((This is a controversy which is likely never to be settled as far as I'm concerned. Well, I think there should be some issues never settled, some mysteries never solved.... I suspect mankind NEEDS a few vital ambiguities and critical insolubles.

((This comment comes to you courtesy of a bottle of Champale on an empty stomach. Happy New Year.))

LETTER FROM SCOTT EDELMAN

July 18, 1978

'1 feel a bit odd writing to you solely to correct you on topics of trivia when there are so many more important things to be said about rape, puritanism, Russian repression and TV violence, but ...

'1) The artist whose name Alter has difficulty deciphering in the DOCTOR STRANGE paperback was Frank Brunner, now noted more for having drawn the first issue of HOWARD THE DUCK than anything else.

'2) Bill Warren, in his "Sprocket To Me!!!" column, notes that Jack Nicholson played "the masochistic dentist in LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS." Wrong. He in fact played the dentist's patient who insisted on having his teeth yanked without novocaine.

'During a recent foray into used bookstores near Wahington, 1 came across a paperback volume titled TABOO 2: FOUR SHORT STORIES NO PUBLISHER WOULD TOUCH FROM FOUR LEADING WRITERS. It was published in 1965, two years before DANGEROUS VISIONS, a book with the same concept. What's more, an ad in the back of the book tells of TABOO 1 which contained tales by Robert Bloch, Ray Russell, Fritz Leiber and (among others) ... Harlan Ellison. 1 find it a bit odd that Harlan gets all the credit for breaking new ground, when what he's actually done is snatch someone else's idea and used better P.R. Have you ever seen this book? 1 can't recall anyone ever mentioning it, and I'm sure if its existence were known in fandom, others would have demanded an explanation and asked to hear less about Harlan's much-vaunted originality.

'1 don't like reading serials until 1 have all parts in hand, so 1 won't be reading ONE 1MMORTAL MAN until next issue... or the issue after that ... or whenever you're done squeezing it into SFR. But never fear, feedback will eventually arrive.'

((Thanks for the info on Brunner and for the Nicholson correction. Everybody wrote and told me about Brunner. In fact, I've now ordered the two all-Brunner books available. Five or six people also mentioned the Nicholson bit.

((Your attack on Ellison is the kind of thing that Harlan refers to when putting down fans and fandom. Even if he was inspired or triggered by the TABOO series, so what? The "forbidden, censored fruit" idea is not new. "NOW! REVEALED FOR THE FIRST TIME..." That's old, old basic salesmanship.

((Harlan does not claim cudos for the idea of breaking new ground in sf. Only, I think, for making it work so well.))

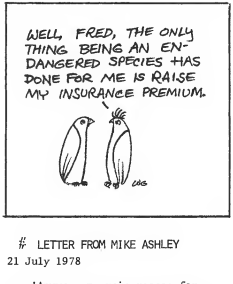
LETTER FROM JOY GOODIN

July 19, 1978

'1'd like to add one more item to the H. Beam Piper bibliography -- a story entitled "Dearest", in the March 1951 issue of WE1RD TALES. So far as 1 know, this completes the list.

'Another point that might be of interest: the description of the battle of Fyk, in LORD KALVAN OF OTHERWHEN, seems to be based on Paul Murray Kendall's description of the battle of Barnet, in RICHARD THE THIRD. 1t would be interesting to know if Piper made use of other historical works the same way.

'1 hope your prediction works out, and you do get an article on Piper. What 1 am really looking forward to, though, is the interview with C.J. Cherryh.'



LETTER FROM MIKE ASHLEY

21 July 1978

'Anyway, my main reason for pouncing at the keys for once is the useful biblio on H. Beam Piper. 1've often wondered why people rate him so highly, because whilst his stuff is good, so is a lot of other work by other writers. 1 think it's chiefly because he's been overlooked for so long. 1t so often happens that a few dedicated fans cherish the name of so-and-so, and then one day, beyond all their wildest dreams, that name is suddenly big business. Then all the fascination is lost because the name is on everyone's lips. 1t happened with E.E. Smith. Once his name was revered and hallowed. Now many look down on his books with a sneer and say to new readers, "You're not still reading that old rubbish". Much the same has happened to Lovecraft and Howard, 1 feel, and doubtless will happen to others. It's a phase. In due course they will become honoured Patriarchs, a la Wells and Verne.

'But 1'm rambling. Piper ... you give some of Tuck's data on Piper on P. 10 since Wm. Denholm says little is in print. 1 might also refer you to page 153 of the February 1966 ANALOG. There Campbell gives a reply to a reader's letter asking why "Down Styphon!" was printed in ANALOG after it had appeared as part of LORD KALVAN OF OTHERWHEN published by Ace some four or five months earlier. For those without that issue to hand 1 will quote in part as it throws some insight onto Piper's suicide:

'"ANALOG bought "Down Styphon!" -- it was written for us as a sequel to "Gunpowder God" -- from H. Beam Piper through Piper's agent Ken White. Unfortunately Ken White died suddenly leaving all his affairs in a chaotic mess. (1t was this, in part, that put Piper in such a financial jam, and caused the acute depression that led to his suicide.)"

'Whilst writing I might as well ramble about myself for a while, as I always have ulterior motives to writing letters (as I'm sure Alter has too!) I'm currently completing a book on the 7 Wonders of the World and when that is finished I shall be engaged in two projects of research. I'm hoping some of your readers may be able to help.

'Firstly, I have obtained formal approval from the Estate of Algernon Blackwood to research for and write a Biography of the man. I'd be interested in hearing from anyone who has any information on the writer, especially if he had any dealings with him, directly or indirectly; or if he has any data on Blackwood's magazine contributions.

'Secondly, I'm working on a complete (!) Bibliography of British Science Fiction. I do mean complete, however suicidal that may sound. My terms of reference are very wide -- if in doubt, include. It's bad enough defining British let alone sf, but essentially my main problem is identifying real writers from pseudonymous. I'd be interested in hearing from any writer of British birth or parentage (or who regards him/herself as British) who has sold any sf/fantasy stories or novels anywhere in the world. I see the July/August 78 ASIMOV'S SF magazine contains a first sale by Canadian resident Patricia Nurse, but as she is of English birth and upbringing I shall almost certainly be including her in this Biblio. My research must be exhaustive (and exhausting), since over the years I've learned never to trust anything in print. So much that is taken for granted turns out to be false, and I'm endeavoring to contact personally every British writer of sf, or for those alas no longer with us, friends or relatives. So many have vanished into oblivion, and I've no idea what has become of Festus Pragnell, George E. Rochester, Douglas Newton, Vincent Clarke and umpteen other writers, but some day ... All and any responses will be welcome and dutifully acknowledged.

'Incidentally, I have already made some fascinating discoveries on the matter of pen names and background information on British writers, but I realize what an exacting job I have taken on. Still, I think it a job worth doing, and even if no one else does, I'm happy, and that's what matters.

'PS: I suppose you've heard the tragic news that Mike Rosenblum died on June 29th of a heart attack. Most sad.'

((Yes, I am sad to hear of anyone's death. Even sadder, perhaps, is that I can't place Mike Rosenblum. A fan?

((For those who have info Mike can use in his project, he lives at:
Mike Ashley, 4 Thistlebank, Walderslade, Chatham, Kent, ME5 8AD UNITED KINGDOM.))

LETTER FROM POUL ANDERSON

26 July 1978

'Thank you for SFR #26, interesting as always. A couple of letters invite replies.

'My friend, Sandra Miesel, is under a misapprehension when she calls me "a writer who considers literary criticism to be inherently worthless". It's just that, pace Ted Sturgeon, 99.99% of it is, at least of what I have seen (Precisely because average quality of this genre is so low, I seldom look at it, and therefore may well have missed some items which are good.) Criticism can be enlightening, entertaining, and otherwise possessed of literary virtue. For example, George Orwell wrote some brilliant essays on the works of others.

'Within science fiction, I can think of three or possibly four critics who are worth reading -- indeed, well worth reading. Sandra is one of them. (This isn't my judgment, because she's said nice things about some works of mine; after all, she has disliked others.) Otherwise, we have a lot of pretentious garbage mongers -- and, to be sure, still more reviewers, who are quite a different breed of cat from critics.

'In fact, I have published criticism myself. The quality of it is for readers to judge, but surely the introductions to books by Leiber, de Camp, and Clement, as well as my contribution to Bretnor's volume THE CRAFT OF SCIENCE FICTION, count as critical essays. In all of them I was mainly indulging myself in what Anthony Boucher called "the noble pleasure of praising". However, I did try to show some of the reasons why the works discussed are outstanding.

'Sandra is also mistaken in calling me "obsessively modest". Actually I'm such an arrogant bastard that I don't see any need to make a fool of myself by tooting my own horn. When somebody calls me a lousy writer, I don't get angry, I just quietly pity the poor, tasteless yut.

'Turning elsewhere, another friend, Gordon Dickson, also makes some remarks which might be commented upon. He thinks we're heading into a period of neo-puritanism. I think that we're already well into one, which is going to get much worse before it gets better.

'At first glance this opinion may look ridiculous. Sexual permissiveness, legalized pornography, widespread use of a variety of drugs, strident demands for equal rights for everybody with no mention of equal duties, weakening of law and order, collapse of public education and respect for learning, all this and more have now been added to that long-time American materialism and self-indulgence of which PLAYBOY magazine is perhaps the principal spokesman. So are we not living in a totally hedonistic period?

'Well, let's think about that, and start by defining our terms. The original (capitalized) Puritans were, of course, reformers who would either make over the Church of England or break away from it altogether. By no means were all or even most of them ascetics, and many were strong advocates of increasing the freedom of the individual, at least in certain areas. However, Puritanism did tend to attract a certain personality cluster and to bring about a certain type of social order. We can find the same kind of thing elsewhere, e.g., in Savonarola's little day, or centuries of Spanish history, or the medieval Catharists, or the Wahabite sect in Islam, or ....

'If, therefore, in defining lower-case puritanism, we remove any attachment to a specific religion, what is left that such movements have in common? Doctrinal rigidity, tending toward holism; an ideal of austerity and self-abnegation; zeal; proselytization, and the strict enforcement, by law, of all these standards upon everybody in reach. There is considerable truth in the old difinition of a puritan as a person who wakes up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat at the thought that somebody, somewhere, may be having a good time.

'Today's puritanism does not take an overtly religious form, and so is often not recognized for what it is. But let's just take a look at the world around us and see what we find.

'Communism is the most conspicuous example. Though the ideal is crumbling in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union -- where Solzhenitsyn says it's actually altogether discredited -- it is still official; and it appears to be flourishing

in countries such as China, which even maintains a sort of Anti-Sex League, and Cambodia, where genocide of more-than-Cromwellian ferocity is simply getting more publicity than that of Stalin or Mao.

'Socialism and "liberalism" are somewhat milder examples in the West. For instance, when John Kenneth Galbraith deplores "private affluence and public squalor", what he means is that you and I are ignorant, selfish slobs; our money should be taken from us at gun point and given to the likes of John Kenneth Galbraith to spend, as they see fit, for the good of Society.

'The various "liberation" movements demand that everybody drop everything else and give full dedication to their causes. I have a small organization going known as The People's Movement for Liberation from Liberation Movements. Anybody care to join?

'The eco-freaks and "limits to growth" types are another example -- and here I speak as a long-time conservationist. With missionary fervor, we are told how we must lower our expectations, adopt appropriate technology, and so and so on. Facts (such as the health and safety records of nuclear power plants or the possibility of starting industries in space) are ignored; after all, a holistic faith explains everything, doesn't it? People are ignored likewise. (We tell them in Bangladesh that there can be no more economic growth. Herman Kahn estimates that the Sierra Club alone has cost the United States a billion dollars in goods and services, which is to say jobs. But then, such organizations don't think prosperity is good. In prosperous times, too many people can afford to buy things that are in dreadful taste.)

'I could go on, but doubtless my point has become obvious. It is only emphasized by the well-being of so many puritan leaders -- such as the liberals who decree that working-class children shall be bused all over town, then get in their limousines and ride home to their lily-white suburbs where their own children are enrolled in private schools. After all, among the original Puritans, it was rich merchants and their well-fed clergy who most ardently told the laboring classes of the value of hard work and temperance.

'In short, we've already had our hedonistic period. By now, PLAYBOY looks creakily old-fashioned. To be sure, trends don't reverse themselves simultaneously, or overnight, or totally. So drugs and porn are still on the increase, though I predict a crackdown in the fairly near future; divorce may remain easy and cohabitation legal; in many ways, the next puritan era would be unrecognizable by Cotton Mather. Nevertheless, in most things that matter to people then, it will be puritan.

'I expect to end my days as an old unregenerate who shocks the hell out of his grandchildren.'

((Of course the new puritanism has abandoned religious and moral sin as its justification; social sin is the new evil, including ecological sin...and it also promotes bureaucratic empire building.))

7-24-78 MONEY, MONEY, MONEY, MONEY. BIG MONEY. Snap, snarl, grab! There is a story in the WALL STREET JOURNAL today: 'FOX FILM AND MCA WAGE A LEGAL BATTLE OVER SPACE FANTASIES.'

Fox thinks MCA's BATTLESTAR: GALACTICA is a copy of STAR WARS, and they want the ABC TV show to be cut from the ABC schedule.

BATTLESTAR: GALACTICA is being shown as a movie in Canada now---any Canadian fans have an opinion? Is it a copy of STAR WARS?

MCA has a countersuit; says that STAR WARS is a copy from two of their properties: BUCK ROGERS and SILENT RUNNING.

Ha. Ha. It appears that both Fox and MCA think space wars can be copyrighted. Any space war, anywhere, anytime.

Billions of dollars are at stake, here, folks, so these suits will be pursued to the bitter end.

The WALL STREET JORNAL story goes on to say that STAR WARS will be pulled from theaters on Sept. 5, 1978, and STAR WARS II is scheduled to be released in the spring of 1980.

Speaking of STAR WARS copies and coattail-riding... Have you noticed the cover of the Belmont Tower book 51283, STAR FIGHTERS? 'Red Rian, Nila and Dann battle to free the stars from Lord Blorg's icy grip!'

AND the cover of Alan Garner's THE WEIRDSTONE OF BRISINGAMEN, a fantasy. Ace Books insisted on putting a Darth Vader-like figure in the foreground, with Ben Kenobi-like figure in the background wielding a white sword....

There's nothing legally actionable about these swipes and similar-looking picture elements, of course. But it's tacky. I can understand Tower doing this sort of thing in their struggle with the biggies for rack space and sales, but for Ace to go this route....tsk.

LETTER FROM MICHAEL MOORCOCK

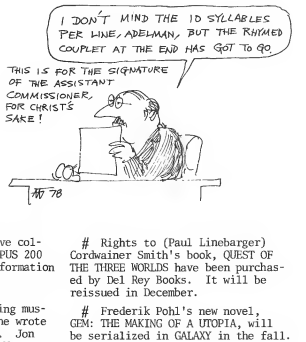
17 July 1978

'Thanks for SFR. As enjoyable as ever. It's funny you should mention what happens when you announce an SF magazine -- or just a magazine. I said that contributions to NEW WORLDS should be laconic and in the form of news items. What do I get? Short stories full of tautologies (I suppose we must blame Brautigan and Vonnegut) which these days pass as 'art' writing or 'new wave' SF. It hardly seems worth all the effort over the years when you read the same imitative junk written at even greater length than the junk you used to get -- the only difference is that there's less imaginative content in the new stuff. What can you do?

'Schweitzer's remark about UNEARTH seemed a bit rotten. The spirit of UNEARTH is a damned sight more attractive to me than ASIMOV'S anything. All I know is that I throw ASIMOV 'market' flyers in the basket, whereas I've offered to write new material for UNEARTH for whatever they can afford. It's not the money turns a lot of authors on these days, it's the kind of magazine they'll appear in. N.W. never got its fiction by offering the best rates in the field! It had the worst time it was running most of it's outstanding fiction. But then we only bought 1st British Serial Rights on principle and that and the habit of sending out proofs whenever possible and choice of illustrator and so on counts for a lot, I think. ASIMOV'S is a perfectly good commercial magazine. But then so is PLAYBOY.... '

THE HUMAN HOTLINE

S-F NEWS
BY ELTON T. ELLIOTT



Prozine resignations: In addition to Bova's (see interview elsewhere this issue), J.J. Pierce has resigned from GALAXY. Diana King has quit NOVA citing personal reasons, which have no connection with the magazine in any fashion.

Alex Schomburg, now in his fifty-fourth year as a professional artist, will have 3 double pages from ASIMOV'S later this year. Also he will be illustrating 5 stories for Ace Books, probably DESTINIES.

Poul Anderson's latest novel, THE AVATOR will be out from Berkley-Putnam in October. MERMAN'S CHILDREN is the name of the new novel he is working on, portions of which appeared in the FLASHING SWORDS anthologies.

Michael Moorcock's ELRIC AT THE END OF TIME will be out in Britain from Pierrot. It is described as comedy.

H. Beam Piper's estate is now being handled under the auspices of Jerry E. Pournelle who is cooperating with Ace to bring out new books based on Piper's literary corpus. William Tuning, a frequent contributor to ANALOG, is writing the third novel in the popular Fuzzy series. A sequel to SPACE VIKING called SPACE VIKING'S RETURN is in the works and will be authored by Jerry E. Pournelle.

The Ace list for August should include a double book, THE RIM GODS and THE DARK DIMENSIONS by A. Bertram Chandler, the third in a six-part series about Commander Grimes.

The Del Rey list for July should read SHE AND ALLEN by H. Rider Haggard.

Finally, the Berkley list for July should have the Suzee McKee Charnas novel, MOTHER LINES, and the Terry Carr anthology as hardcovers, with the rest as paperbacks. And the Terry Carr anthology in paperback should've read THE YEAR'S FINEST FANTASY VOLUME 1, not VOL.II, as listed in SFR #26.

PEREGRINE, a collection of SF poetry by Robert Frazier, the theme being man's "outward urge", will be available from SALT WORKS PRESS (Dennis, Ma.) in September.

Isaac Asimov will celebrate book number 200 in February '79, when his second retrospective collection/cum autobiography, OPUS 200 will be published. This information courtesy of Jim Wilson.

Anne McCaffrey is writing music for some of the lyrics she wrote for the Dragonriders series. Jon Anderson of the rock group, Yes, has agreed to help her; she thought his music would be appropriate for what she had in mind.

Number 8 in Robert Weinberg's Lost Fantasies series will feature THE LAKE OF FIRE by Edmund Hamilton. The issue is scheduled for late summer or early fall at $5.50 per copy. The address is Robert and Phyllis Weinberg, 10606 S. Central Park, Chicago, IL 60655.

James P. Hogan is at work on a novel tentatively titled MICROPLANET JANUS. Also in the works is a third novel in the INHERIT THE STARS/THE GENTLE GIANTS OF GANYMEDE series.

C.J. Cherryh has completed THE FADED SUN: SHON'JIR, second in her Faded Sun series. The hardback should be out any time now. She is also at work on the concluding volume in her GATE OF IVREL trilogy.

Joe Haldeman is doing a non-fiction book on space travel for St. Martin's Press entitled THE ENDLESS HORIZON.

Charles Sheffield, in addition to being one of the brighter newcomers to the science fiction scene, is also the vice-president of the American Astronomical Society.

Ace Books has doubled its growth in the last year, moving it from tenth to sixth in paperback house size. The reasons, according to Ace SF editor James Baen, are in large part the work of Tom Doherty, president of Ace, and the purchase of Ace by Grosset & Dunlap, the latter transaction giving Ace the stable financial base any sound business must have.

Rights to (Paul Linebarger) Cordwainer Smith's book, QUEST OF THE THREE WORLDS have been purchased by Del Rey Books. It will be reissued in December.

Frederik Pohl's new novel, GEM: THE MAKING OF A UTOPIA, will be serialized in GALAXY in the fall. It will be published by St. Martin's Press in 1979.

Tony Rothman, author of the recent Del Rey title, THE WORLD IS ROUND, is the son of the physicist Milton Rothman, who also wrote SF under the name, Lee Gregor.

Elizabeth Lynn has sold a fantasy trilogy, CHRONICLES OF TORNER, to Berkley for a five-figure advance.

Jack Vance has sold ten older books to Daw for an advance well into the five-figure range.

Berkley will publish Tom Reamy's short story collection. Together with the just published novel, BLIND VOICES, it will be, due to his unfortunate death, most likely all of his works that we shall see.

Del Rey will publish NIGHTWORLD by Dave Bischoff sometime in 1979. He and Ted White have sold a book to Popular Library.

Joan D. Vinge has sold two short novels to Dell for their Binary Star editions; the names are MOTHER AND CHILD and FIRESHIP.

Robert Silverberg has sold the rights for his new novel for $127,500.00 to Harper & Row, the highest sum ever paid for the hardcover rights to an SF novel. The name of the novel, LORD VALENTINE'S CASTLE, is described as a long epic adventure set on an "extrasolar" planet twenty thousand years in the future.

BATTLE STAR: GALACTICA NEWS

The first seven hours of the series will be run as three movies from ABC-TV around the second part of September. The first movie will

run about three hours, the next two will run about two hours apiece. These will serve as an introduction for the network series which will appear on Sunday nights (8-9 pst).

According to publicity releases they will feature:

"The Pearl Harbor attack for openers, then take off like WAGON TRAIN and from then on it's cowboys and Indians".

If this sounds exciting you will be thrilled to know the movie will also feature a robot dog called Muffit, the Daggit.

ACE NEWS:

October:

James Baen -- DESTINIES (first issue)
Colin Kapp -- THE ION WAR
Alexie & Cory Panshin -- EARTH MAGIC
Fred Saberhagen -- THE VEILS OF AZLAROC
Harry Harrison -- SKYFALL
Steve Wilson -- THE LOST TRAVELER
Ian Watson -- THE MARTIAN INCA
Gordon R. Dickson -- PRO
*Andrew J. Offutt -- CONAN AND THE SORCERER
*Larry Niven -- THE MAGIC GOES AWAY

*Both books will be published in a trade edition of six by nine inches. They will appear under the Sunridge Press label, a division of Grosset & Dunlap, and will be published in a mass market format about six months later.

Reginald Bretnor has sold an anthology to Ace; it will be a three-volume set. The title is THE FUTURE AT WAR. Both reprint stories and original work are needed. Address: Reginald Bretnor, POB 1481, Medford, OR 97501. He has also sold a collection of "Papa Schimmelhorn" stories to Ace.

Randall Garrett has sold several of the Lord Darcy stories to Ace. They will appear in chornological order.

November:

Fred Saberhagen -- THE HOLMES-DRACULA FILE
Arsen Darney -- THE SIEGE OF FALTORA
E.E. Doc Smith & Gordon Eklund -- LORD TEDRIC
Anthony Bellairs -- THE FACE IN THE FOREST
Ben Bova -- STAR WATCHMAN
Robert Sheckley -- IMMORTALITY INC.
Alexei Panshin -- MASQUE WORLD
Andre Norton -- ZARTHOR'S VANE
Andre Norton -- WITCH WORLD
Andre Norton -- WEB OF THE WITCH WORLD
Andre Norton -- THREE AGAINST THE WITCH WORLD
Andre Norton -- WARLOCK OF THE WITCH WORLD
Andre Norton -- SORCERESS OF THE WITCH WORLD
Andre Norton -- TREY OF SWORDS

BERKLEY NEWS:

October:

Frank Herbert -- THE DOSADI EXPERIMENT
Poul Anderson -- VAULT OF THE AGES
Scott Baker -- SYMBIOTES CROWN
Robert Silverberg -- ALPHA #9
*Samuel Delany -- EMPIRE

*This will be a trade book; it will have text-tipped full-color illustrations by Howard Chaykin.

November:

L. Sprague De Camp -- HOSTAGE OF ZIR
Ted White -- SECRET OF THE MARAUDER SATELLITE
Stanley Schmidt -- LIFEBOAT EARTH
Robert Silverberg -- THE MASKS OF TIME

DEL REY NEWS:

October:

Clifford Simak -- MASTODONIA
Juanita Coulson -- WEB OF WIZARDY
Alan Dean Foster -- DARK STAR
Eric Frank Russell -- THE BEST OF ERIC FRANK RUSSELL
James White -- THE WATCH BELOW
Poul Anderson -- A MIDSUMMER TEMPEST

November:

Patricia A. McKillip -- HEIR OF SEA AND FIRE
Jack L. Chalker -- QUEST FOR THE WELL OF SOULS
Cordwainer Smith -- NOSTRILIA
Robert Hoskins -- TO ESCAPE THE STARS
Howard Saunders & Jake Waldrop -- THE TEXAS & ISRAELI WAR: 1999
Evangeline Walton -- PRINCE OF ANWEN

Phyllis Eisenstein has sold a new novel to Del Rey entitled SORCERER'S SON.

DAW NEWS:

October:

Ian Wallace -- Z'STING
Jack Vance -- THE KILLING MACHINE
Lin Carter -- THE PIRATE OF WORLD'S END
Ron Goulart -- THE WICKED CYBORG
A.E. Van Vogt -- EARTH FACTOR: X

November:

Jack Vance -- WYST: ALASTOR 1716
Tanith Lee -- NIGHT'S MASTER
Hugh Walker -- WAR-GAMER'S WORLD
Arthur W. Landis -- CAMELOT IN ORBIT
Arthur W. Landis -- A WORLD CALLED CAMELOT

Gerald Page will have an anthology coming out from Daw. The title is HEROIC FANTASY. It is an original anthology.

SPOTLIGHT:

Featured Authors: Jack Dann and F. Paul Wilson

JACK DANN:

A novel, JUNCTION, has sold to Dell. It should be out sometime in 1979.

Another novel has been sold to Doubleday, titled DISTANCES, and a short-story collection called TIME-TRIPPING.

He is at work on a novel for Harper & Row entitled WHIRLCAGE.

A novelette is forthcoming from FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION.

A poetry chapbook, CHRISTS, is out from the Bellevue Press. It contains three poems (one long poem), two of which are SF, and the chapbook is illustrated by John Fenton. It will be some thirty pages in length, the price is $4.00 unsigned, $6.00 signed. Copies can be obtained from Jack Dann, POB 555, Johnson City, N.Y. 13790, or from the Bellevue Press, 60 Schubert Street, Binghamton, N.Y. 13905.

Also available, an anthology of poetry edited by Jack Dann, a set of six. It includes poems by Disch, Le Guin, Aldiss, Dorman, Bishop and Yarbro; also included is a poem by Jack Dann, all of which can be obtained from the above address.

In the works are short stories, a mainstream novel and another anthology with Gardner Dozois.

F. PAUL WILSON:

Between 12/77 and 6/78 he has signed contracts for two novels, a novella and two short stories.

The first novel is WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS, due in November from Doubleday. It shares the same background as his first novel, HEALER, still in print from Dell.

The second novel, CARAPACE is a mainstream written in collaboration with Barbara Sloan; however F. Paul Wilson's name will appear only on the copyright page. It sold for a five-figure and is due from Nal in 1979.

The novella, THE TERY, will be published in February by Dell as one of its Binary Star editions; it will be paired with a Gordon Eklund novella.

A short story has sold to ASIMOV'S. It's title is "To Fill the Sea and Air".

A second short story, "Demonsong" was purchased by Gerald Page for his Daw anthology, HEROIC FANTASY.

CONCLUDING WORDS:

Although there are a number of pros who would be loathe to admit it, STAR WARS has had a tremendous impact on SF.

The most visible example is the publishers, who now believe that written SF might be able to make money. Whether STAR WARS has attracted the buyers necessary for the rapidly increasing production of SF is just one among many question marks.

TV is a case in point as regards expansion. The fall '78 season features a half-dozen SF series, with more in the wings. It's becoming apparent that the failures of recent SF series (LOGAN'S RUN, THE MAN FROM ATLANTIS) are now seen, thanks to the STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS successes, as failures of those individual shows, not the failure of SF to attract a mass audience. Movie Activity remains prominent, with a dozen or more in the works.

But despite all the activity on the screen (large and small) it's written SF where the real boom is taking place.

The newsstand magazines now number seven. There are now a large handful of non-fiction SF magazines (STARLOG, FUTURE) where two years ago there were none. Plus the subscription-only zines (GALILEO, UNEARTH) and a reprint thing called SKY WORLDS.

In the future we can expect paperback-zines, DESTINIES, and large-size, well-financed magazines paying big bucks ($1,000.00 to $1250.00 for short stories) to authors and charging big prices ($2.00) to consumers. NOVA, from Penthouse, is the first of these. On the rumor horizon are about ten other magazines. In my estimation, the market for SF short fiction in SF magazines will have quadrupled from 1/76 to 1/79. This doesn't count the science fiction skin mag market or the original anthologies which are showing signs of recovering from the rise and fall of Roger Elwood.

But the really spectacular increase will be in books, where there will be about 1000 to 1500 new titles in 1979. Every major and most minor lines will be increasing their output. A conservative guesstimate of the total cost to the completist collector and diehard movie-goer would be around $4000.00.

Whether this is the beginning of a boom which will carry SF where no genre has gone before, is debatable. The alternative position, held by many pros and fans, is that this is just a prelude to a nasty bust.

In any case, whether short term or long, welcome to the big time, folks. See you next column, where I'll have an Iguanacon report.

THE ACKERMAN INTERVIEW
By Elton T. Elliott

SFR: It's been several months since the first part of your interview; could you bring us up to date on the Perry Rhodan situation?

ACKERMAN: Sure, the biggest problem right now is the arrogance of the German publisher. His attitude, one of indifference, is costing everybody involved a lot of money.

SFR: How?

ACKERMAN: Well, we have on hand some thousands of subscriptions which we will have to return to the subscribers. Also the months that are going by are costing the German publishers a lot of sales.

SFR: What exactly is holding up the republication of the Rhodan series?

ACKERMAN: They want an exorbitant amount of money. Way too much for the small sales we would get from a subscriptions-subsidized effort. They are even asking for more money from us than they asked of Ace.

SFR: Why is this?

ACKERMAN: Well, the American dollar has slipped so much in comparison with the German mark that they believe these higher prices are reasonable. You know, it isn't as if they need the money. They are so big and make so much money that they don't care whether the U.S. has a Rhodan or not. In fact, when the writers of Rhodan in Germany asked for a raise, the publishers stated, "Hell, we'd rather drop it."

I've been pestered to death with the Rhodan business, what with the subscribers and all -- why, just last week we had to write up a report to send out to all of them. It is to the point where I've told Wendy, it's not worth it.

SFR: What other things are you going to be doing?

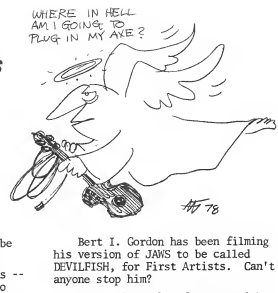
ACKERMAN: Well, I will make my eleventh appearance in a movie in a film called AFTERMATH. Wendy and I will be guests of honor at the Fantasy Film Celebration in Pittsburg in September. I'm doing a book of my best-beloved stf stories of my youth for Bantam. I also will be doing a book called THE SOUVENIR BOOK OF MR. SCIENCE FICTION'S FANTASY MUSEUM which will feature 800 color photos of top collector's items in the 4E SF Foundation. In the fall, Wendy and I will spend a week among pros and fans in Spain and Portugal and I will be a judge at the week-long movie festival in Sitges, Spain.

SFR: Thank you so much, Mr. Ackerman.

ACKERMAN: Thank you.

SPROCKET TO ME!!!

SF, Fantasy and Horror Film News



BY BILL WARREN

The science fiction boom predicted by so many in the aftermath of the stunning success of STAR WARS and the lesser but still notable profits of CE3K, seems to me to be rather slow in taking off, at least in the U.S. There haven't been many blatant imitations of either of them yet, and the big semi-SF epic of the summer, THE SWARM, is actually just another disaster movie. CAPRICORN ONE may not be SF in the first place. BATTLESTAR GALACTICA waits in the wings.

There are a few genuine imitation STAR WARS items around, but they either haven't been released yet or may not be made at all. Japan didn't get SW until July of this year, and the delay enabled a Japanese producer to get his picture onto local screens either just before or simultaneously with Lucas' film. A Japanese film magazine gives the title as MESSAGE FROM SPACE, and shows what seems to be a clipper ship made of aluminum, sails and all, tacking through the starry void.

Harlan Ellison wrote a treatment called SEVEN WARRIORS, SEVEN PLANETS for Filmation and Dino De Laurentiis. (He'd already wrapped up the script for I, ROBOT.) For Harlan's peace of mind, in a way I hope this doesn't get filmed, because with Filmation and De Laurentiis involved, it's not likely to be shot the way Ellison wrote it. I wish that his film could be made, but I'm afraid that's unlikely.

Filmation and De Laurentiis are also each making a FLASH GORDON feature; Filmation's will be an animated TV movie to be shown this fall, and De Laurentiis' will be a live-action, theatrical film.

Anne McCaffrey's DECISION AT DOONA was optioned by Gary Youngman. Spider Robinson's CALLAHAN'S SALOON is being scripted. Robert Radnitz, producer of many fine family films, such as A DOG OF FLANDERS and SOUNDER, will film Arthur C. Clarke's DOLPHIN ISLAND.

Roger Corman claims to want Peter O'Toole, Henry Fonda and Richard Burton for his planned space spectacle, BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS, but I suspect this film won't be made.

One of my favorite pastimes -- that's an exaggeration -- is to plow carefully through VARIETY'S International Film Annual, published to coincide with the Cannes Film Festival. It's in this volume that most foreign producers announce their films for the coming year. I have a great time picking out all the fantastic films I can find.

There's a new British film called THE SHOUT. Alan Bates is a lunatic who believes he has -- and believes correctly -- an aboriginal power to kill with a shout. Reviews from England have been favorable, so this may get released here.

AIP plans to film THE AMITYVILLE HORROR, one of those bogus "true" books purporting to detail real supernatural happenings. They also plan to complete the film of Richard Condon's astonishing WINTER KILLS, which was 3/4 completed a few years ago.

Jerry Weintraub will produce three "OH, GOD!" followups, each to star George Burns. Jane Wagner, Lily Tomlin's partner, will be writing and directing the first. The other two will be written by Andrew Bergman and Josh Greenfield, and all three are planned to be shot back-to-back early next year.

Chuck Jones is making some new cartoons for Warner Brothers; one of these will be a sequel to DUCK DODGERS OF THE 24 1/2 CENTURY, and is being written by Chuck and Steven Spielberg.

The VARIETY annual included a full-page ad for a film to be called GAD. The adline reads "The New War is Mind -- The New Mind is 'Gad'". I don't know what it means either. It will star Malcolm McDowell and be written and directed by Stephen Geller from his novel, not yet published in the U.S.

Bert I. Gordon has been filming his version of JAWS to be called DEVILFISH, for First Artists. Can't anyone stop him?

Milton Subotsky, formerly with Amicus in England has formed Sword & Sorcery Productions. No plans to tart Lin Carter's THONGOR IN THE ALLEY OF THE DEMONS in October. Several Thongor followups are planned as well as SOLOMON KANE, from Robert E. Howard's character. They also plan THE MONSTER CLUB, horror short stories, LUC ORIENT from the French-Belgian comic books, a science fiction comedy called NO TIME FOR HEROES, written by Sam Lundwall, and NIGHT OF THE CRABS from a Guy Smith novel. Some of Stephen King's stories are to get the horror anthology treatment, and three are to be combined into one story with a man-vs-machines theme.

Dimension pictures has THE REDEEMER -- SON OF SATAN, which was already released in England. Another apparently completed film is OUT OF THE DARKNESS with Donald Pleasance and Nancy Kwan. They also announced GIGGLING IN THE DARK (by Ignatz Nabokov?) and THE SEVEN INCH WILDERNESS, the latter from a script by Ib Melchior.

There was a remake of JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH a year or two ago, which has never seen US release, and now there's also KING SOLOMON'S TREASURE. This seems to feature dinosaurs, giant crabs and a huge volcano, judging from the ads. The film is supposedly based on Haggard's ALLAN QUARTERMAIN. It is directed by Alvin Rakoff and the executive producer was the depressing Harry Alan Towers. The film stars David McCallum, John Colicos, Patrick Macness, Britt Ekland and Wilfrid Hyde-White.

Harry Alan Towers' name on a film is Bad News. He's a man of no taste or talent with a record of really rotten films. Now Allied Artists has announced "H.G. Wells' THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME", with

Towers as Executive Producer. God save us all.

John Richardson is scheduled to star in COSMOS: WAR OF PLANETS and INVASION ON PLANET, two ungrammatical titles of unknown foreign origin (probably Italian). They may have been completed.

Mark L. Lester starts production in August on HIGH-SCHOOL 2000, in which teachers are computers, the principal is a robot and the students refuse to obey. That's the future?

Richard Kiel, "Jaws" in THE SPY WHO LOVED ME and Eegah in the rotten old movie of the same name, is starring in an Italian SF film, called THE HUMANOID. It costars Barbara Bach and Corinne Clery, and will be (or has been) directed by George B. Lewis.

Other new Italian fantasies in production, planned or recently completed, include RETURN TO ATLANTIS, ENFANTASME, PAPE SATAN, THE END OF THE WORLD (not the one with Christopher Lee) THE ARGONAUTS, THE SPACE TRAMP, DAWN OF THE FALSE GODS, DR. JEKYLL, EYES BEHIND THE STARS, FRIENDS IN SPACE, WAR IN SPACE, BATTLE OF STAR SPACE, WAR OF THE ROBOTS, STAR ODYSSEY, BEAST IN SPACE, VOYAGE BEYOND THE UNIVERSE (and I said the SW craze hasn't started?!), VOYAGES OF THE NIGHT, CANNIBAL GODDESS, TERROR and DAMNED IN VENICE.

Britain is making more fantasy-oriented projects, with MACUMBA, ALADDIN AND THE GIANT and ARABIAN ADVENTURE (with Chris Lee) in production. THE DUMMY is probably another gee-the-ventriloquist-is-controlled-by-the-dummy story.

A huge ad promised a film "One step beyond STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS" in Milton's PARADISE LOST, which makes me wonder what on earth they are going to do to the old blind man's story.

JUBILEE is a punk-rock vision of the future which has been getting smashingly favorable reviews in England. The Australian horror film PATRICK is apparently being recut for U.S. release.

Now in production is the major SF film for next year, ALIEN. It's a monster-is-loose-on-the-ship film, but one that promises to be excellent. The set design is novel and stunning, the cast is superior, and the director (Ridley Scott) is promising.

This could well be an especially good film. For one thing, they are definitely not going the lightweight adventure route; a film which includes a scene of a monster eating its way out of a man's chest is not for children. The script was pre-rated R, and the final film is expected to have the same rating.

Okay. So much for news. Now on to my favorite part of the column, what I've been seeing lately.* Here I get to pass judgment on the handiwork of crews of dedicated professionals, films which people have been working on for years, and over which I get to run roughshod. I shall praise lightly or outright condemn. The power is mine. I am God.

*For many of these films, I am deeply indebted to Tim Wohlgemuth; he's the film coordinator for The Academy of Science Fiction and Horror Films founded by Donald Reed. I never cared for Reeds' Count Dracula Society, since the membership didn't get much for their fee, but this Academy apparently is different. For $25 per year, each member is entitled to see free movies every week, often two. Many of the films I see for each column were run by the Academy and selected and obtained by Tim.

Marcel Carne is a French director who peaked early in his career, with the 1940s' CHILDREN OF PARADISE, often acclaimed as the greatest film ever made. (I think it's pretty good myself.) In recent years, though, he hasn't done too well, with most of his films not even being released in this country. In general, I suspect the same fate awaits his new THE MARVELOUS VISIT, a film of one of H.G. Wells' most obscure novels.

The adaptation is apparently rather loose, but follows the same basic plot: an angel falls to earth near a small town. The film is gentle and romantic, and somewhat slowly-paced. The beautiful young male angel gradually discovers that earth isn't heavenly at all. There aren't many fantastic scenes, other than the basic premise; it's mostly a working out of the can-innocence-survive theme.

The town eventually becomes very suspicious of the angel, and eventually even the village priest is unable to protect him, but the film doesn't really have a downbeat ending.

The basic problem with the film is that the story idea is too slight for a full-length film and the director doesn't seem to be inventive enough to fill out the running time. It becomes a little tedious, though it is always thoroughly professional. It's not a great film, nor is it in any way really bad (just naive); it's a nice little mood piece, nothing more. It may be the work of a genius, but it's a minor work at best.

It's not likely to turn up in theatres, but it is available to colleges and may be shown on campuses, in case you'd like to see it.

Disney films continue to mine their own small but fertile vein of science fiction. The most recent example is the entertaining and harmless THE CAT FROM OUTER SPACE. It's written by Ted Key and directed by Disney regular, Norman Tokar, who is generally a cut above the other regular directors.

The most amusing aspect of the film is the opening, which affectionately parodies openings of many cheap SF films of the 1950s and later. The plot follows formula lines: the alien pilot, the kitty of the title, finds a friend in the standard Disney intellectual nebbish (here, Ken Berry, who is capable of better things) and with the help of several others, a necessary and valuable item -- gold -- is found which will enable the kitty to return to his mother ship. There's a warm-hearted twist at the end, and although the very last scene is a total fizzle, the promise of sequels is just that -- a promise, not a threat.

The film suffers from the usual Disney reliance on sports-done-funny, comic semi-gangster, and the baffled military. However, the lines are reasonably fresh and the direction is light and inventive throughout. Lots of silliness passing for science never hurts this sort of film, and occasionally there's a very nice scene with the balderdash science as a basis, such as when Berry finds that he can use the cat's psi-boosting collar.

Despite ample opportunity to do so, the film never attempts to emulate STAR WARS in any way. It's pleasant, undemanding summer entertainment and typically seems to be making a lot of money. The cat, by the way, is a stunningly well-trained and photographed Abyssinian, who is much more interesting before he gains his telepathic voice.

THE TEMPTER is a standard Italian EXORCIST-ROSEMARY'S BABY imitation, with Mel Ferrer and Arthur Kennedy turning up in the lushly-photographed story. A woman is possessed by what may be the Devil (although this is never clear), and begins to act in typical fashion. It's somewhat better than most of these things; the effects aren't particularly good, but there's lots of

them and they are imaginative in conception. Albert de Martino directed; he does many of these imitations of boxoffice bonanzas. There's one scene featuring one of my most-longed-for scenic ideas: a woman has sex with an invisible man. It's not done too well, but it's still the best in the film, and together with what else goes on, it has a certain power. There's not much to recommend the film otherwise, though it is made on a reasonable level of competence. There's really just nothing new about it, and except for dyed-in-the-wool horror buffs, it doesn't offer anything to the viewer.

ONCE UPON TIME is an unusual title for an unusual film. It is apparently a U.S.-Israeli coproduction, and if I recall correctly, was made when the writer-director couldn't get the rights to Sturgeon's MORE THAN HUMAN; there are some plot elements in common. A moron with casually-used psi powers of various types forms an alliance with a Tel Aviv (?) street kid and a girl who's been mistreated by her religious-fanatic father. The basic idea isn't bad, and some sequences are very good. It's extremely well photographed, but most of the acting is all too amateurish. There's one plot element that's so dumb that I suspect the writer dragged it in solely in a mistaken attempt to increase his commercial possibliities.

When the strange, almost moronic fellow comes upon the religious fanatic beating his naked daughter with a whip while laughing fiendishly (the film is, at least, unabashed), the strange young man burns the father's eyes out. This is accomplished in a far-too-long scene using mattes in place of the eyes. When the authorities discover what's happened, they decide a new superlaser must have been used, and so the army begins to hunt down these obvious enemy agents. That's 1950s cheapjack plotting, and didn't belong in a picture of the intended maturity of ONCE UPON TIME. Also, nothing, absolutely nothing whatsoever, comes of it; the urchin is captured and beaten by the army, but that was just a plot device to accomplish certain ends that could have been reached in many other ways.

And the ending is a puzzle. All story logic, and even any semblance of a plot is abandoned; the final scenes are apparently unrelated to anything that has gone before and are inexplicable in and of themselves. I know what was intended, but it is so awkwardly done that the intent is almost totally obscured.

The director-writer does show a very good imagination, but also a pseudo-intellectual writer's failings and a lousy sense of pacing. Perhaps he can learn from the obvious errors in this film the next out. ONCE UPON TIME is certainly novel in some areas, and consistently showed a good sense of humor, but the repetition, the shakiness of the conception of the central character, and the puzzling ending will probably prevent its ever being released.

DOMINIQUE is a lushly-photographed, numbingly-dull DIABOLIQUE pastiche with an excellent cast. Jean Simmons fears the cold-hearted hubby Cliff Robertson is trying to drive her insane; she attempts to get new chauffeur Simon Ward to help her, and failing that, commits suicide. Thereafter, Robertson begins to be haunted by what seems to be Simmons' ghost (she plays the title role), and eventually starts to go bonkers himself. The film claims to have a surprise ending no one

can guess; that's reasonable, since it depends on many off-screen happenings the audience cannot surmise. It's a trick, and a cheap one at that. Is there anyone, anywhere, who is still fooled by the It's-all-a-plot Plot, or ever wants to see it again? I'm only annoyed by it, and wish producers would wise up. This was the first film of Milton Subotsky's Sword-and-Sorcery Productions, and seems to be having trouble finding a distributor. Despite my complaints about the plot, I suspect the real reason it has not yet found a distributor is that it's so damned slow-paced. Despite gorgeous photography and some good performances (Jenny Agutter and Ron Moody are also in the cast) it really isn't worth seeing.

Unfortunately, neither is JAWS 2. The first JAWS was dynamite, one of the most entertaining thriller of its type I've seen. (Come to think of it, probably the only other film of the type is KING KONG.) I wasn't expecting the sequel to be as good as the original, but I also didn't expect it to misfire as this one has. Not that it's a terrible film; Roy Scheider's fine performance, again as Chief Brody, is alone almost worth the price of admission.

But all the producers could come up with is a rehash of the first film's plot. The director, Jeannot Szwarc, is certainly nowhere near as good as Spielberg, and the characters aren't as interesting as those in the first film. This time, instead of seeming to be a super-intelligent, almost diabolic creature of evil, the shark is just a big fish that eats people. It has no personality.

There's nothing like the thrilling sense of adventure JAWS 1 had when the three heroes went out to meet the fish in his own element. Instead of the three sharkfighters, JAWS 2 provides only a bunch of rather innocent teenagers; this seems extremely distasteful to me. There are two death scenes that are downright sick, one involving a boy being smashed against the side of a boat by the shark, the other of a girl being engulfed by the shark before the eyes of a little boy she's been protecting.

The ending is better than in Hank Searls' credible novelization, but nothing else is. The film does manage to develop a great deal of uneasy, unpleasant suspense, nothing like the thrill of anticipation of the first picture. However, when one girl earnestly prays, I knew nothing at all bad could happen thereafter; it would somehow mean that the shark was allied with the devil. This film is mostly for the curious.

On the other hand, HEAVEN CAN WAIT is probably for everyone. This is a remake of the early 1940s hit, HERE COMES MR. JORDAN. (And has nothing to do with the other early-40s film, HEAVEN CAN WAIT.) Because of a cosmic mistake, a football player is taken to Heaven before his predestined demise, and Mr. Jordan (James Mason), who seems to be God's right-hand man, helps try to straighten things out. The plot is complicated, and since it's a great deal of fun to watch it unravel, I won't say anything more about it here.

What I will talk about is Warren Beatty. For years, I thought of him as Shirley MacLaines' marginally-talented kid brother at least until BONNIE AND CLYDE, when as many did I suddenly realized that he's actually a damned good actor in his own right. He seemed to carve out a special niche, that of the sexually-insolent, intelligent sharper and

do it perfectly. But I didn't suspect he could play a role like the one he has in HEAVEN CAN WAIT. He produced the film, co-wrote it with Elaine May, and co-directed it with Buck Henry, so he must have been pretty busy on the set. Nonetheless, his performance is nothing less than superb; he's sweet, innocent, pigheaded and charming. Joe Pendleton, the football player, is a likeable guy.

Beatty's performance makes the film worth seeing, but it's got a lot more going for it than just that. The script is amusing throughout, never failing in its wit. The other performances, with the unfortunate exception of Mason, are fine, particularly Dyan Cannon and Charles Grodin as a pair of rutting plotters. (Cannon is one of those actresses who is always outstanding and yet never seems to have gotten the role that would provide her with the acclaim due her. This isn't likely to be the one, either.)

But the major virtue of the film is just that -- its virtue. The film has no violence, strong language, nudity, car chases, devils, sharks, spaceships or sex. And there's no discernable smugness about avoiding them. They just don't come up. It's an old-fashioned film in a very positive sense, and the best film so far this year.

It's not great. It breaks no new ground cinematically, it isn't a showcase for anything, but its reliance on and use of all the traditional virtues of Hollywood at its best may mean that HEAVEN CAN WAIT -- with STAR WARS having had most of the same virtues -- is pointing a new direction. The old direction. The film and Warren Beatty are genuinely sweet without being cloying which is the hardest of all qualities to produce in a movie. Please see it.

Please avoid SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND. This is a dismally boring poprock fantasy featuring some of the songs from that famous album, plus a few other Beatles hits as well. But instead of the Beatles, we have Peter Frampton and the Bee Gees. I don't mind the Bee Gees as a group, but they certainly aren't actors. Peter Frampton is a mediocre singer and a worse actor. He's cute, though; he looks sort of like Shaun Cassidy in need of having his hair combed. But he's totally lacking in what smartass charm Cassidy has, and probably won't be acting -- if that's the word -- in any more films. The best thing about the picture, as might be guessed, is George Burns. He narrates, appears occasionally and sings one song; then the movie comes to life.

Steve Martin sings "Maxwell's Silver Hammer" and is required to mug so outrageously that I kept wishing I was in the back of the theatre watching the film through the wrong end of binoculars.

Irwin Allen used to make awful science fiction movies, like the color THE LOST WORLD and VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA; his later TV series, like "The Time Tunnel" and "Lost in Space" were also horrendous turkeys. Later, he got into making disaster films, and lo and behold, THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE and THE TOWERING INFERNO actually were entertaining. Now he has crossbred science fiction with disaster and produced and directed THE SWARM. Unfortunately, it's a lot more like his science fiction films than his disaster movies. It's a stupidly-conceived, ineptly-executed, total botch of a clunker. The film goes wrong in so many ways it's hard to know where to begin. The acting, by a famous, badly-used cast, is amateurish and hammy; the only star to keep his head above water is Henry Fonda, but I have never seen him let an audience down. Michael Caine and Richard Widmark are the principal casualties, respectively playing Earnest Young Scientist and Pigheaded General. The dialog is atrocious, there's no excitement, the effects are obvious and repetitive, and the film is continuously but accidentally hilarious. The Final Solution is stolen from an even worse picture of the 1950s, BEGINNING OF THE END, in which a rowboat in Lake Michigan played the grasshopper mating call and they all jumped in the lake and drowned. Here floats play the bee mating call and they all jump into the Gulf of Mexico. THE SWARM is an inexcusably awful film.

But the evening I saw this had its compensations; on with it was a film that took a year to get to Los Angeles, KINGDOM OF THE SPIDERS (not to be confused with EMPIRE OF THE ANTS). William Shatner stars in this low-budget thriller, in which tarantulas, altered by insecticides, become hive-dwelling and begin hunting domestic animals for food, endangering a small Arizona community.

This film succeeds in every way THE SWARM fails; the characters are well-drawn and believable. The Spiders seem real (are real) and threatening. The picture is well-paced and well-written. The acting is uniformly fine -- I've never seen Shatner better. The situation is carefully and logically developed so that the premise, while not really believable, becomes credible and frightening. And these days it takes a hell of a lot to scare me.

KINGDOM OF THE SPIDERS doesn't really rate as a minor masterpiece, but it's a lot better than anyone had any reason to expect. It's too bad the advertising campaign is so schlocky, because that's one thing the film certainly isn't. It's probably going to be a hit at SF cons in the future. I have the utmost respect for everyone connected with this film; they took an exploitation theme and turned out a genuinely good movie. That's much harder than it sounds.

Yet Joe Dante and his crew did the same thing with PIRANHA. This is Roger Corman's version of JAWS, shot mostly in Texas. Bradford Dillman, who's battling bees in THE SWARM, here encounters a flock of super-prolific piranhas, which can live in fresh or salt water of almost any temperature. Scientist Kevin McCarthy bred them for army use in Viet Nam, but now that the war's over, he doesn't quite have the heart to kill the little buggers. When Heather McKenzie accidentally frees them, they eat almost everyone who sets foot in the river including a lot of little kids on inner tubes.

Dante and the writers were handed the assignment, and delivered the goods for Roger C.; they also went some better and had fun themselves. The picture is swiftly-paced, very funny in spots, and entertaining throughout. It's not quite as good as KINGDOM OF THE SPIDERS, because characterization was sacrificed for yocks, but it's still head and shoulders above the vast majority of this kind of thing and is definitely better than JAWS 2. It's full of injokes and odd gags and the budget for phony blood dumped into the river must have been astronomical.

The frenetic climax of the film, full of skindivers, water skiiers, pighesded generals, selfish resort owners, roaring police cars and voracious piranhas, reaches crazy and giddy heights of excitement, culminating in a practical use for pollution. There's a solid supporting cast, too, with such as Dick Miller, Bruce Gordon, Paul Bartel, Barbara Steele and Barry Brown getting in the way of Dillman and Menzies as they try to halt the piranhas before they reach the open sea. The effects crew was largely under the direction of Jon Berg, and they did a swell, convincing job.

EYES OF LAURA MARS is an entertaining film that could have been much, much better: the talent and time were there, but somehow opportunities were lost. Faye Dunaway

plays Laura Mars, a famous fashion and advertising photographer in Manhattan who has recently been staging sexy-violent ads, exploiting murder in various ways. She's using murder to sell deodorant.

But she has a problem: she's begun having psychic flashes of murder. Someone is killing friends and associates of Laura Mars, stabbing them to death in the eyes (this is not heavily dwelled upon, thank heaven); Laura sees the crimes being committed through the eyes of the killer himself.

Tommy Lee Jones, who played Howard Hughes on TV, is here a police officer assigned to the case; he begins by hating Laura for her exploitation of death and violence, but eventually and predictably falls in love with her.

The film was written by John Carpenter (who co-wrote and directed DARK STAR) and David Zelag Goodman (who botched up LOGAN'S RUN), and directed by Irvin Kershner, whose next assignment is STAR WARS II. The producer was Jon Peters, Mr. Barbra Streisand. The strong supporting cast features Brad Dourif and Rene Auberjonois. But with all this talent, something doesn't quite click.

As a mystery, it doesn't work since we are given no clues whatsoever to whom the killer is; I figured it out, but only by a process of elimination, and avoiding the many red herrings; I think this is a form of cheating on the part of the film-makers.

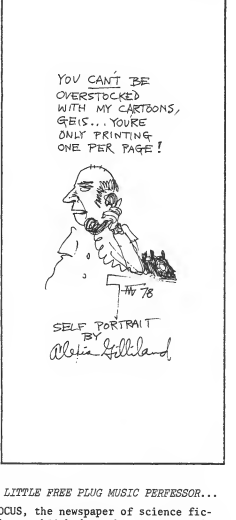
The psychic link between Laura Mars and the killer is never explored, and in the context of the film, this is truly a lost opportunity. Why did Laura link up with the killer when she did? There are hints that she and the killer are, in a sense, made for each other, but this is not followed up on; it seems to me that being so intimately associated with another person's mind would have caused instant recognition when they meet, but this isn't what happens. Damn! I'm stymied. I don't think it's fair to give away the surprise endings of films, unless they've been around a while; the outcome of the picture made my wife and I speculate for some time on what could easily have been done but wasn't. So I'm tempted to reveal all.

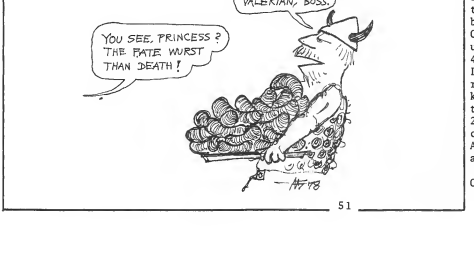
The film can be appreciated for the virtues it has. The dialog is occasionally good (it's also just awful in the romantic scenes and in a scene between Laura Mars and her ex-husband), and the women are extremely well-characterized. The men seem somehow to all be aspects of each other, including Auberjonois and Dourif, who respectively play a swishy agent and a slovenly chauffeur.

The acting is of a very high caliber indeed, much better than the film actually deserves. Dunaway has always been fine at playing brittle women at the verge of shattering; she wears clothes well, even the rather unflattering outfits in this film, and her flaky edginess is used perfectly. She's really convincing. Equally as good in an ill-defined part is Tommy Lee Jones (who looks like a brunette macho Fred); this guy is likely to be a very big star. He is tremendously impressive and I hope to see more of him. Auberjonois does a patented Rene Auberjonois turn and is lots of fun; Brad Dourif, who was the gentle young man in ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST, is totally different here and is excellent.

The photography is very good, mostly in muted browns and golds. The film was made entirely on location in New York, and the locales are very well-used and mostly unfamiliar. I think that the ESP scenes were all predictable since Dunaway isn't doing anything else at the time. If they had occurred when we really weren't expecting them it might have been more interesting; but maybe letting us know when they are coming does serve to build some suspense.

It's a workmanlike film, suspenseful and largely entertaining, but it could have been a hell of a lot better. It certainly qualifies as a fantasy of sorts and is one of the fanciest ones ever made. It's worth seeing but isn't what it should have been.





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ONE IMMORTAL MAN

A SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL

BY RICHARD E. GEIS

SYNOPSIS----------

VIK KUNZAR, the immortal man, has lived through the horrible Bio-War of 2206 that devastated America, Europe, and most of Asia.

He was a king for generations in the savagery and ruins of Europe, as a new ice-age swiftly brought terrible cold and forced the new barbarians southward....

Moving ahead of the human tide, in the 27th century, he triggered one last resurgence of science and technology in Egypt and caused to be planted a new, wondrous ecology of genetically altered and mutated plants and animals in the heart of Africa, in the Congo

When the white savages finally overran Egypt, Vik became a black and journeyed south to live in his new world.

Now, 500 years later, in the 32nd century, the whites are pressing south from the Sahara, seeking their god---a man they call Kun-Zar, whom legend says is immortal and whom their priests say will be their king of kings again and make them forever the favored people on Earth.

Vik has changed as the centuries have slipped past. He is now ever more devoted to sex and danger and the subtle manipulation of people and events.

Yet, for all of his self-indulgence, he has a compulsion to maintain learning and culture, to keep civilization from being extinguished.

As ONE IMMORTAL MAN began he was known as Masil, Emperor Ndola's First Minister....and secret ruler of the empire through vast commercial and banking power.

Computer-run sensor devices---secret remnants of 32nd century technology---alerted him to danger as he was enjoying a tryst with the young and beautiful Empress Punia. Someone was disturbing his medical re-

cords at the estate-tree of his doctor.

Vik sent Punia back to the palace trees and set off alone to investigate. He found two of Defense Minister Quebo's agents torturing the doctor for information about him. He killed the two and regretfully killed the doctor. He returned home unseen. Another alarm told him other agents were investigating his faked birth records in Nubia.

Obviously Emperor Ndola, dying of cancer, hopes that "Masil" is the immortal man---and can be made to give up the secret.

The following day in the gargantuan palace trees Vik had a meeting with Ndola and Quebo. Ndola offered Vik a visit by his Chinese girl who specialized in mouth love.

On the way home that afternoon, Vik and his party were attacked by disguised agents and Vik was deliberately wounded in the thigh.

He made it to his huge tree estate but was confined to bed. The Emperor's private doctor arrived and helped treat the wound while covertly testing Vik for signs of his true age.

The Chinese girl arrived later and also in her fashion tested him. Finally, she paralysed him by injecting a drug hidden in a hollow tooth.

Signalled by the girl, the army attacked Vik's estate and took him prisoner.

He awakened in the army prison on the palace grounds. He was visited by Defense Minister Quebo and the doctor and three guards.

Using self-hypnosis, Vik lulled them into thinking him still paralyzed. At the right moment he attacked, killed the guards, and by holding Quebo and the doctor hostage, escaped unobserved into the underground sewer vines that serve the city of giant trees.

In the huge main sewer vine Vik encountered a young man and woman who were fugitives hiding in the sewer system. He took their boat and forced the girl, Consi, to accompany him on the trip down-sewer to the Congo river.

She cooperated and helped him get past clusters of other criminals and fugitives who live in the main sewer.

Vik decided to pose as a discharged army veteran with a young wife. Once free of the sewer he and Consi found temporary refuge in a small community of lower-class people who live in large hollowed gourds which have a designed ecology suitable for human use.

After one day, Vik and Consi abruptly boated further along the Congo to another bulbhut cluster. Consi didn't like the constant moving and, knowing he was Masil, seduced by the huge promised reward, betrayed him to the authorities.

Vik, ever suspicious and cautious, escaped from the sudden night raid by the army and killed many soldiers during a water chase.

PART THREE

CHAPTER EIGHT

At dawn, Vik was limping through the jungle twenty miles downriver of Kinshasa. He hadn't given Quebo a chance to thoroughly organize and tighten up the shore patrols. The night had helped.

He was past the river search area now, boldly moving parallel to a winding commerce path. He wore only the lionhide around his middle. But he was armed.

He was heading for an arrow farm he owned personally. It was going to be a ticklish business when he arrived. The Emperor had taken over his financial and commercial empire, but that was only by decree. Masil-loyal managers no doubt still held their positions down through the chain in the outlying properties. And it would take time for the word of the decree to spread.

Vik was counting on that, and the distance from Kinshasa -- close to 100 kilometers.

He was very angry at Quebo. The man had virtually been given the empire -- subject only to Ndola's near-term inevitable death from cancer -- and Vik had expected only a half-hearted search for him. A highly visible but not very long-lasting or efficient effort.

Instead -- as last night proved -- the capture of Masil had top priority, with a huge reward promised.

Of course Ndola was pushing Quebo desperately for results, but there were ways for a Defense Minister to disobey ... to come up empty.

No, Quebo was into this all-out search for other reasons than orders from Ndola.

Why wasn't the man content to simply let Vik go? Why try so hard to recapture him? Was he too now intent on sharing the secret of immortality? Was he finally convinced of Vik's identity?

It didn't matter to Vik at the moment. What was important was staying alive and free. But he knew he should have killed Quebo, in the prison.

He heard the distant mutter and muted talk of a large group of men on the path. He crept closer.

Soldiers. At least a squad. And most of them were Nubians; tall men like himself, and superbly muscled.

Vik angled away from the path, deeper into the raw jungle.

Suddenly the spine-tingling shriek of a Howler sounded in the jungle. Vik cursed and began to run hard. His thigh hurt again. He damped the pain.

The Howler species, developed by the Egyptians, was a small, blurringly fast animal, extremely scent-sensitive, which could track a fugitive virtually anywhere.

It was part bloodhound and part snake. Its bite could be fatal. Usually its venom only caused excruciating pain and a weakness in arms and legs that kept the hunted one from running or walking.

Once the Howler has bitten its prey its cry changes to a ululating wail that allows its masters to find it -- and the writhing, whimpering escapee -- in a short time.

Apparently the squad on the path had had a Howler along, and it had been sensitized to a piece of clothing from Vik's tree ... taken by the soldiers before the blast.

Or maybe something from the bulbhut. Something provided by Consi.

Vik ran swiftly away from the path, knowing from the shrieks of the beast that it was gaining on him.

But he was probably outdistancing the soldiers who were crashing through the jungle after the beast. And that would give him needed time to try to kill the thing.

He veered right and then right again, seeking a certain type of shrub in a certain type of location.

The Howler was almost upon him. He didn't want to have to kill it by dagger or sword. That would prove that it had been onto him and that he was close by.

The truth was that Vik wasn't sure he was quick enough to kill the beast. It was blurringly fast in a ground attack.

He veered left past a stand of trees and found what he had been looking for -- a muddy bog and a few Scagla bushes.

He leaped off his left leg into the bog and waded further.

The Howler, shrieking its earsplitting cry, arrived a few seconds later. It darted into the bog

a few steps, realized it was vulnerable, and leaped backward. It stood, trembling with frustration, and ran around the perimeter of the deep mud.

Vik deliberately waded closer, to lure it next to one of the Scagla bushes. If he was lucky ....

The mud at the base of the bush rippled and a wet brown ooze spider surfaced, attracted by the Howler. It was the size of Vik's fist and, within a short distance, was as fast as the screaming beast.

It had skittered across the intervening space and was onto the Howler before the beast was aware of it. Its poison-bearing mandibles sank into the Howler's thin-furred hide and found flesh and blood.

The animal's cry died in seconds, as it died, baffled and terrified at its inability to breathe. The big spider fattened visibly as it sucked blood.

Vik carefully slogged free of the deep mud. The soldiers were near, but no longer guided by the screaming. If they did find the dead Howler they would see the bloated spider atop it and think the beast the victim of a false scent and bad luck.

Vik could only hope that there would be time for the mud to smooth out and obliterate his tracks.

He circled wide, still limping, and wondered if he would ever have a few days respite in which to let his thigh would heal completely. He held his sword ready. The dagger was sheathed in his loin covering.

As he neared the commerce path he quietly rounded a clump of head-high ferns and came face to face with a Nubian soldier in the act of squatting for a bowel movement.

There was an instant of intense sadness for Vik as their eyes locked. They both realized in a fraction of a second what was going to happen.

The Nubian recognized him ... and would shout. Vik would kill him. Vik had to kill him before the shout was born.

Vik lunged as the soldier drew breath. The sword slashed across the soldier's throat, opening the man's windpipe below the larynx. The blade also cut the thong holding the man's identification tag.

The cry of alarm became a horrible exhalation. The soldier twisted as he fell, reaching for his long spear stuck butt-first in the soft ground, next to his knapsack.

Vik slashed powerfully at the back of the brave man's neck and cut through the spinal column. The body went limp.

Vik stood listening. Then he quickly stripped the big Nubian body of the army tunic and equipment. The tunic was fortunately free of blood. He put on the tunic and, after a few seconds' thought, stripped the body of its loin covering and substituted his own lionhide. He searched for and found the cut thong and identification tag.

He grimly mutilated the corpse's face until it was unrecognizable. Then he cut a thigh wound to match his own. He transferred the Jop scab dressing, and then he dragged the body into the ferns where insects would quickly cluster in the wounds and within hours make identification even more difficult.

With luck the other soldiers would think their fellow had run off. The Nubians were known to be unhappy soldiers this far from their homeland.

With even more luck the body would delay and confuse the search. After a night of insect and animal damage the remains might fool an army commander into reporting the death of the escaped Masil, a victim of cutthroats or desperate army deserters. The gold, the jeweled dagger and the sword would be missing.

With bad luck they'd find the body too soon.

Vik took along the soldier's pack and weapons. He stayed parallel to the commerce path, but deeper in the jungle.

After a kilometer he stopped and buried Quebo's dagger, along with the elite guard's sword. He hated to leave the sword, but both weapons were too distinctive and no doubt their descriptions were included in the Wanted At Any Cost leaves that would by now have been distributed to all search commanders, and all soldiers would have been told to watch for anyone with such weapons.

Vik also buried the spear, and all the gold went into the ground, too. He kept the soldier's worn and nicked ironwood dagger.

He found enough food in the pack for a good meal. There was even a sealed bulb of wine. Vik ate and drank it all, and concentrated on fast-healing for his thigh.

The wound had not opened again and the scab was small. It looked to be a two-week-old injury, now almost healed. The big meal he had just eaten would help it even more.

He turned his attention to the Nubian soldier's identification tag. It was a slice from an ironwood root, holed for the neck thong, with the man's name and number inscribed on one side, and with his home village and province on the obverse.

Vik studied it, made a face, and dug up the expensive metal dagger. Only a tempered metal point could make a convincing cut in the tag. He made some careful changes and alterations.

He used a tough Nymca root as a thong and tied the altered disc to his neck.

Vik was now Baina Tumma, aged veteran of the army, discharged after thirty years service and many wounds; his home was in Abu Zabad.

Vik reburied the dagger and moved on, carefully, alert to the multiple dangers of the jungle. After four hours he rested and cat-napped another four.

He bagan to look for a safe place to spend the night. Such were few and far between in raw jungle.

As sunset turned the sky pink and darkened the jungle at ground level, he picked a Tsime tree and managed to climb its slick, smooth trunk by means of coating his hands with the sticky sap of a smaller nearby tree, and by using the immense strength of his arms and shoulders.

In the high, thickly leafed branches he felt secure. He created a nest of small branches between two close crotches, and once again slept deeply for short periods, concentrating on the fast-healing of his thigh wound.

In the dawn light he finished his tenth short sleep and shifted to examine his leg. The wound was 95% healed now, a thin pink line and a faint crust of scab at one end. No one would believe he had been stabbed to the bone three days before.

But the price he had paid was high. He was weak with hunger and dry-mouthed with thirst. His body was not rested; its recuperative powers had been focused exclusively on the wound.

He sighed tiredly and carefully made his way to the ground. He rubbed his face and felt the stubble. He felt old enough to be a thirty-year veteran, and he hoped he looked it.

Vik walked slowly, exhausted, hungry and thirsty, toward the commerce path. He dragged the pack. His mind dredged up memory of this region.

Boldness was necessary. Between him and his destination was a yanya-infested river. The only way over was a bridge. It would be guarded by army men. That would be a challenge. He might have to wait till dark. The alternative was a trek through jungle east toward Kinshasa and the nearest path bridge -- and more soldiers.

But now he was starving, and desperate for a drink. He had to risk contact on the path.

When he reached the path (what the Whites would have called a dirt road) he sat on the ground and waited, eyes closed, head hanging low.

If an army patrol approached, with a Howler along scented to him, he wouldn't have a chance.

CHAPTER NINE

He heard them first. Men. Laughing, talking. The creak of a wagon, the hoof sounds of donkeys. Coming from the direction of the Congo. He lifted his head and opened his eyes. He didn't move. The men started singing an obscene army song favored by the Numba tribe. He relaxed. The Numbas were from the northern provinces, and were also tall men.

He watched the army wagon pulled by four donkeys come around the bend. It was only about fifty meters away. Soldiers straggled along behind, some dragging their spears.

The driver of the wagon, a sergeant, saw him but didn't react. The men saw him but remained careless and unchanged in manner.

Vik slowly got to his feet. He kept his shoulders slumped. When the wagon reached him he fell into step beside it. "Can you spare a veteran a drink?!"

The sergeant smiled and handed over a bulging hide of light wine.

Vik accepted it gratefully. He drank deeply. When he handed it back he said, "Thank you, brother". Then he added ironically, "May you live to be a veteran".

The man was in his late thirties. He chuckled. "I'm not planning on being a soldier another twenty years".

"You may have no choice". Vik continued trudging along beside the wagon.

The sergeant grunted in agreement. "If this is your way, climb up and ride. The army is generous to its veterans."

Vik made a point of being old and clumsy as he mounted to the flat wooden seat. He said bitterly, "I would be happy if the army could recapture my home from the white devils. I would be happy if the army could find the deserters who stole my discharge leaves and my gold".

The sergeant said, "Not too loud about desertion. I'm afraid to look around to see how many men I have left." He yawned hugely. "We've been on search for a day and a night, mostly in the raw between paths". He snorted. "I can see old Masil in the jungle!"

Vik nodded. "I have heard something about him trying to overthrow the Emperor ... I don't care about politics."

"Ndola wants him, to kill him. So we have to beat through river swamp and bogs. If Masil is anywhere he's on one of his estates or sailing on the ocean by now!"

Vik asked, "Can the army spare a veteran some food? I'm starving."

The sergeant nodded and pointed to a large box behind the seat.

Vik leaned back, lifted the lid and took out a small bread loaf and a leaf-wrapped ball of dab nuts and honey. "May you own a tree." He ate greedily. He drank more wine.

The men straggling along behind called for a rest and some food and drink for them, too.

The sergeant agreed and drove the donkeys and wagon into a path-side clearing.

Vik helped pass out the food and wine skins. He joined the men in talk and jokes.

The asked about his career in the army.

He told stories ....

"I fought mostly in southern Egypt. When I was young we held them at the third cataract. Year after year. They keep coming. They fight at night a lot. We had some good leaders then. We used to use our blackness, we Nubians, and slaughter them in the night. They put mud and stain on themselves and learned our tricks.

"Each year we gave up a mile or two. It got so bad for us we were brought south -- here -- to serve for a year as reserve. Then an emergency in the northwest .. when they broke through and took Lake Chad."

A young soldier said, "I heard we lost a hundred thousand men there."

Vik nodded. "At least. And they lost a half a million. There's no way of really knowing. I think I've killed a thousand Whites. I see their painted faces in my sleep. They scream and yell so much when they fight. I killed them to make them stop screaming at me!"

"Have you been wounded?"

"A few times. Nothing serious. I was lucky". He showed thin, old scars on his arms. "I've spent the last ten years behind the fighting. Keeping records and teaching youngsters like you some killing tricks. My eyes are not keen enough now for fighting. And I'm so slow ... The most important lesson is to never take your eyes from the point of your opponent's dagger or spear or sword. Never."

"I've heard the eyes---"

"The point! Watch the point and you'll absorb his balance and his posture automatically. You'll develop a sixth sense. You'll get to know all the tricks and fighting styles. But you always must see the point of the weapon, and you must always be sure to avoid it or deflect it."

"But that is defensive! When do you attack?"

"When your opponent's point is out of position to kill you. When you can thrust first. When he is exposed. When you know his weakness as a fighter."

"And what about thrown spears, and arrows?"

Vik shrugged. "That's why you are given a battle shield and why you have keen eyes."

"Shields weigh too much."

"So does an arrow in the guts. Your duty as a soldier is to kill, yes, but first your duty is to stay alive and in position. The Whites are in a hurry, always in a hurry. They don't like to fight for very long. The longer you avoid one of their points, the better chance you have to spot a weakness or seize an opportunity to kill them!"

The sergeant clapped a hand on Vik's shoulder. "I understand how you have become a veteran!".

Vik grinned. "The most important reason is that I am a coward".

Everyone laughed.

A young soldier asked, "Have you had a white woman?"

"Many white women. The whites keep their camps close to their line

of invasion. They always press forward with their people. There are always thousands upon thousands behind them, wave after wave... They have to move forward to find food. They never stop to plant and harvest. They only know how to rob others of food."

"What are white women like?"

"They usually stink. They're dirty. They gabble languages impossible to understand. And their white flesh disgusts me. It doesn't seem natural."

"But you've tried their women, eh?" More laughter.

Vik smiled and shrugged. "When I was young... Yes. Many times our unit wiped out a white fighting pack and took their camp. First we had to kill all the children -- the boys because they would grow up to be fighters, and the girls because they'd grow up to bear more whites -- and after that we were allowed to take the young women for pleasure. Some of them were beautiful in their way, and some were eager to taste our poles in any way we wanted. Some of those white beauties with their yellow hair ... some with red hair ... most with brown hair ... some were wild to have us. They thought if they pleased us we'd spare their lives. They were right, for a while."

A soldier said, "We've heard Ndola has a white woman who sucks his pole day and night."

Vik shrugged. "I'd be sure her teeth were gone."

Everyone howled with delight.

The sergeant rose and ordered the men back to the path. "We have to cross the Zung at Mandinba by noon." He climbed back up to the wagon's seat. He gestured for Vik to join him again.

He bowed his head briefly with thanks and climbed up.

The morning passed pleasantly for Vik. He drank occasionally from the wineskin and talked with the sergeant. He was careful to probe the man for key personality and character clues, then fit himself to that template, so that in a few hours he was the man's best friend and father-image.

Yet there was a resistant core to the man that Vik sensed and could not probe. There lay a slight uncertainty ... a slight danger.

They reached the small Congo tributary, the Zung, around noon. The town of Mandinba clustered around the narrow wooden bridge. As Vik had expected, soldiers guarded each end.

As they approached the bridge, Vik asked, "Where do you go after we cross?"

"I think we stop at the bivouac over there, to wait for orders. We need the rest." He reigned in the donkeys near the bridge and got down to talk with a sergeant of the guards.

Vik appeared half drunk as he sat on the wagon bench, but his eyes darted alertly. He watched the conference and read body language. He tensed when the sergeant pointed at him and the guard sergeant squinted and nodded, studying him.

The two sergeants started toward the wagon. The tired soldiers clustered around the wagon, leaning against it, talking. One soldier asked Vik, "With your gold stolen, why don't you sign up here and train us? I'd like to learn some of the tricks you learned when you were fighting."

"Learn the basics well and the tricks will follow on their own."

The two sergeants reached the wagon. The guard sergeant said, "Let me see your I.D." There was no hostility or suspicion. His key muscles were relaxed.

Vik leaned forward and flipped the ironwood disc from under his tunic. It hung away from his chest.

The sergeant steadied it and read it, front and back. He glanced up at Vik's face, then stepped back. "You have any recent wounds?"

Vik shrugged. "A scratch..."

"Let's see it!"

Vik casually pulled up his tunic and showed the now faint evidence of the stabbing in his thigh. During the long morning ride, fueled by the wine and army food, his fast-healing process had sloughed off the last of the scab. All that was left was a jagged pink line in his black skin. Even that would be gone by the next morning.

"You're not Masil. He couldn't even walk with the wound he's supposed to have." The sergeant looked at Vik's other thigh. "Okay, Tumma, if you want to stay with this unit for a while, and do your share, you have permission. No pay, but you'll eat and have a bed."

Vik nodded. "Mother army still wants me."

Even the guard sergeant grinned. He waved the soldiers across the bridge.

Vik helped unload the wagon and care for the animals. He ate the evening meal with the men and purposely helped in the kitchens, making friends. After dark he returned and played pongo -- a card game -- with the guards as they loitered drinking strong tea and eating pastry.

At the right moment he filled his pack with cheese, bread and wine bulbs.

A few moments later he was on the path, running painlessly, and gracefully and silently further south. The arrow farm was at least seventy kilometers away, close to Maquela do Zombo. He faced at least three days' steady walk-and-run.

CHAPTER TEN

As he skirted the arrow farm he saw that they had a good crop, almost ready for harvest in this section. The thousands of one-meter-tall Tungo tree sprouts swayed slightly in the warm breeze, creating sensuous, rippling patterns in the vast field.

The third leaf was just beginning, the signal for cutting, drying, dipping in zomba oil and point-hardening in fire. Feathering was the final step.

After that most of the crop would go to the army---a single band of red would be painted on the shaft just ahead of the feathers---and the rest to private guard companies and small private armies. Each had its own registered identification color code.

He carried the army pack and wore the army tunic and ironwood dagger. He was still Daina Tumma until he knew it was safe to surface as Masil. Then the business of dealing with Quebo -- and the faltering empire -- could be begun.

One problem was that he didn't personally know the manager of this farm, and establishing his true identity might be a problem.

Information first.

He waved at field workers and minutes later trudged into the farm's hub of offices, the manager's tree home, huts, processing sheds and warehouses.

He headed for the workers' kitchens and begged a small loaf and a gourd of wine. Veterans were respected and gratefully helped. Everyone feared the barbarian Whites Everyone had heard the horror sto

ies of what they had done to the peoples around Lake Chad before the imperial army pushed them back to the Djado Plateau.

As she methodically cut yams for the evening meal, a young, big-breasted cook dealt him the latest facts and rumors.

"The manager ran away this morning. His tree is empty. He heard last night that Ndola is killing all of Masil's men, the high tree ones, and most of the middle. We expect an empire manager sometime, tomorrow, maybe. Gummi didn't know where he stood, so he and his wife took the path south."

"Who runs the farm now?"

She made a face. "The young second, Baidoa. He'll kiss the pole of the empire man and join the government."

"What if Masil comes here?"

She laughed. Her breasts shook entrancingly. "Baidoa would dribble shit as he ran." She scowled. "And he would run straight to the palace trees to tell."

"Are there many people here loyal to Masil?"

She was suddenly suspicious. "Why do you want to know?"

"I ... heard in the army that he pays very well, and cares for his workers. I'd like to work for him."

"He's never been here, but he has fair rules and pays good wages. The manager before Gummi tried cheating us, it got to Masil, and the man was jungled."

Vik nodded and turned away. He was furious with Quebo for the slaughter of the top management of all the Masil holdings and enterprises. He was furious with Ndola, too, but he could understand Ndola's desperation and line of thought. Ndola's first priority was capturing Vik and securing the secret of immortality. To that end he would do anything to cut Vik off from high-level help, to isolate him, immobilize him, make him vulnerable.

But Quebo's first thought should be to preserve the managerial structure that largely kept the empire -- and the war effort -- running smoothly.

Those top men in Kinshasa who were not dead were in hiding or in flight for their lives. The effect on commerce and finance and government would be catastrophic.

Six months from now the whites would find themselves winning a lot of battles and occupying enormous new areas of central Africa.

Vik felt disgust and contempt -- for himself. Now he had to try to salvage the empire. Masil had to surface and mount an overthrow of Ndola and Quebo -- that whole incompetent bunch in the palace trees. And now he had to restructure his financial and commercial lines of power, to keep the empire functioning -- to keep the supply lines full and the social machinery working.

He said to himself, half aloud, "I should have had those lion-fuckers killed years ago."

"Who was killed years ago?"

"Is Baidoa in his office now?"

"I suppose. He likes that desk and all the runners and being important. You gonna ask him for a job here?"

Vik smiled at her. "Maybe more than that." He stood, squeezed a big handful of soft breast, kissed her cheek, and walked out of the cookhouse.

She called after him, "If you stay, big man, I've got an empty bed to share."

Vik crossed to the central offices built around the base of the manager's home tree. This tree was big; it had ten rooms clustered up the trunk and out along the major branches, and height for more.

Vik entered the office rooms at ground level. The living purple rug underfoot was a delight to his feet. There were workers and under-managers clotted near the door of an inner room. A young woman was looking urgently through a thick file of record leaves at a killed-wood desk.

No one paid any attention to him. He headed for the clot of men by the inner door. He heard a young man's voice cry out in exasperation, "But the army commandeered half the donkeys and wagons. So there's no point in harvesting arrows if we have no room for them after they're processed, is there?"

A deeper voice said, "We have room in the warehouses for thirty thousand if we move the Ibadan shipment into the center court and shelter them with an Owo vine."

"I'm sure the Kwara of Ibadan will be happy with arrows stinking of Owo sap."

Vik pushed into the room. It was the farm manager's office, and a harried young man whose assistant manager's arm bracelet was hanging from a gold manager's necklace around his neck was angrily facing a stocky foreman.

Vik said, with authority booming in his voice, "Move the Ibadan shipment into the shade under this tree, and tear up the carpets anywhere you can to cover other shipments if they must be in sun. And sprinkle them with gin oil."

Everyone looked at him. As usual Vik towered over everyone. He threw the army pack into a corner. "I am Masil! I own this farm, and I am taking command of it!"

He strode around behind the big, killed-wood desk and casually shoved Baidoa out of the chair.

The foreman had not moved. He stared impassively at Vik.

Baidoa sprang to his feet. "You can't be Masil!" But the tremor in his voice said he believed otherwise. He looked around for support.

The foreman said, "If he is or not, he knows arrows. I'll accept those orders."

Baidoa said desperately, "I'm the manager now! The drums say the Emperor has taken all Masil-owned farms and businesses. Even if you are Masil ... you're a ... traitor. They'll kill you!"

The doorway was filled with people, watching, listening. Outside there was shouting: "Masil...

Baidoa cleverly said to the foreman and to the crowded listeners, "If you believe this Nubian he'll get you killed or thrown into prison. He's not Masil! He's only trying to run a bluff. He wants whatever money he can find -- and then he'll be gone! And you'll be overrun by the army when word gets to them that Masil is here!"

Vik sighed and drew his dagger.

Baidoa rushed on: "If he is Masil your danger is even worse! Anyone who helps him will be tortured and killed. So get rid of him now! Run him off! Don't risk death!"

Vik pointed his dagger at the husky foreman. "What's your name?"

"I am Deba, head of storage and supplies."

"Deba, take Baidoa and lock him up somewhere."

Baidoa edged away. Deba did not move. "Can you prove you're Masil?"

Vik said to the crowd by the door, "Has anyone on the farm been to Kinshasa and seen Masil?"

They frowned and shook their heads. They shrugged.

Baidoa risked another speech.

He was near the door. "He knows we're too poor to visit Kinshasa. It's too far! He's here because he's probably a deserter!"

Vik smiled at him. "You're probably a dead man."

Baidoa fled the room.

Vik said to the foreman, "The defense minister is taking over the empire. He thought I was his rival. He moved against me. I escaped, but I had to pose as an army veteran recently discharged. Until official word arrives ... someone with official papers or leaves that show I no longer own this farm... I do own it, and I will give orders here!"

Deba grinned. "You talk like you own it. You act like you own it -- " His smile faded. "But Masil is said to be an old man. You have grey in your hair but black in your beard. And you move young." He folded his arms across his thick chest.

Vik said, "You make better arguments than Baidoa. I --" He saw unusual movement in the courtyard. The window membrane wasn't of the best, but it appeared that a knot of workers were badgering a Messenger as he rode a lion to the tree.

Vik had had contact as first minister with almost all the Messengers. He knew this man.

A moment later the Messenger entered the office. He stopped when he saw Vik. He showed both palms. "I have news and information for the great Masil."

A sighing "Ahh...." passed through the onlookers.

Vik smiled. "You are...Kaloma?"

The man nodded and smiled in turn. "I carried your words and instructions to the southern provinces one year ago."

"I'm glad you're here now. A moment." Vik told Deba to carry out the instructions: imprison Baidoa. Deba was now his second in command. There was no doubt among those present now: a Messenger would never lie. This one had said the Nubian was Masil.

When the foreman had left and the room emptied and the door closed, Vik turned to the Messenger. "What's the situation?"

"My route is to all southern Masil properties as made known to me by Lusaka, head of the Congo Associates and Development Company. The instructions to the managers and seconds: they are to help Masil in any way he wishes if he comes to them. They are to cooperate with any legal empire directive or with any legal empire worker, appointed manager, or army commander, subject only to countermand by Masil."

"When was this instruction given?"

"On the evening of the fourteenth. The Masil tree had been attacked the night before. Masil had been taken to the palace prison. The Masil tree had ... erupted ... and Masil had disappeared from the prison. Details of these events are lacking. Kinshasa is swarming with army, searching for Masil. Stories are spreading of impossible feats by Masil in his escape."

"Do you know of the killings of my associates and high managers in Kinshasa?"

"No. I hear the drums, but they are not to be trusted. Drums are too limited."

"Yes, they're no competition for a Messenger, except they carry a simple message far faster."

Kaloma said stiffly, "Simplicity is always deceptive."

Vik laughed. "I'm not disputing your value." He sat in the large manager's chair. "The balance of your route is cancelled. I will now give you the names and places of men I wish a message given. Some may be dead, others may be gone or in hiding. In no case are you to leave this message for them or allow it to be forwarded. It must be delivered in person. You have been in empire and Masil employ all your working life, so you know these men by face. The message is important and must be delivered to as many of these men as possible, as soon as possible. The message is for Lusaka, for Rukwa of the Empire Bank, for Mawale of the Mid-African Construction Company, for Gitega of the Kinshasa Transport and Shipping Company, and for Gulu of the Congo Development Company. The message: Gather gold, arms, trained weapons men, and send all to Kikwit arrow farm near Kwilu. You come fast and secretly. End. Masil. Message in addition for Gulu only. The Message: If you haven't already, counterattack with plan Oregon. End. Masil. End messages."

Kaloma nodded. "I need a period of rest and a fresh lion, if you have one."

Vik nodded, rose, and led the man out of the office.

Thirty minutes later, Vik watched the Messenger ride north toward Kinshasa on a big, motheaten male lion, the best of the three lions in the farm pen.

Vik wondered what had happened to his prized Copper Tom. Killed in the attack by the army? Taken by some looting army officer? Vaporized when the pile went critical the next morning? He hoped the big cat was still alive.

He turned and started up the spiraling ramp to the living rooms of the huge Junto tree. The recently fled farm manager had left most of his possessions behind.

Deba came striding across the big courtyard. "Masil!"

Vik waited for him. "Did you catch Baidoa?"

"Yes. He's sitting in a drying box. How long do you want him kept?"

"Until I say. Maybe weeks. Give him a tether and feed him. But lock him up at night. Is there anyone missing, now, from the farm? Now that it is known that Masil is here?"

"I've not heard that anyone is gone. I'll count bodies and report later."

Vik nodded. "And there is a young woman cook I met when I first arrived. Send her up to me clean and happy, in an hour."

Deba smiled. "Yes, Masil."

Vik turned to the five tree servants who had served the farm manager and were now waiting to serve him. They waited on the first tree level of living platforms and rooms.

Ten minutes later, Vik had inspected the tree, met the servants, told them what he expected, and settled into the high manager's rooms.

He sprawled on the large sponge bed, naked, and waited for a young woman servant to announce his bath. His mind was on his plans for the next few days.

He listened to the drums from the village a few kilometers away, pounding out the major news from Kinshasa... Masil gone. Ndola no find. Ndola sick worse. No ships leave. No fruit two days. Banks closed.

The drums stopped. Far away, to the south, Vik guessed, another village drummer relayed the short news bits.

The girl entered the bedroom, stared at him, and managed, "The... the bath is ready, great Masil."

He smiled. "I need it." He arose from the sponge bed and strode past her to the bathroom. Her name was Salina. He gestured her to follow.

He eased himself slowly into the hot, scented water. The tree's bathing pod was large and he could extend his legs completely. He closed his eyes and said, "Salina, take off your smock, take soap and wash me everywhere. Get in the pod with me."

She answered breathlessly, "Yes, great Masil."

As she bathed him, using gentle, reverent, soaped hands...silky hands...he relaxed even more. This was luxury. And being able to freely caress this young woman's body was luxury.

He had always been an admirer of lovely breasts, and this girl was endowed with a type he loved -- jutting, pointed, unmarred yet by stretch marks, unaffected by gravity.

He reached to a shelf beside the pod and poured nut oil into his palms from an ornate green bottle. He filled his hands with Salina's perfect, youthful breasts. He closed his eyes and lost himself for a few moments in the velvet slickness of her flesh. He grew a tremendous erection and enjoyed the feeling of potency, of masculine power.

Salina responded. Her breathing speeded and she began washing him there. Her touch was exquisitely gentle.

Vik asked, "Do you fear it?"

"No, great Masil. I desire it."

He smiled, embraced her, and lifted her as he gathered himself and stepped out of the pod.

They joined on the living sponge mat beside the pod. Vik discovered she was not as deep as he wished, and he was careful not to injure her. He was sure the older young woman from the kitchens would be capable of taking him. He would enjoy her...and she him...for long hours.

Four days later a Messenger arrived seeking Masil. Vik received the man on the highest living platform of the tree. A new room was being grafted onto the five-meter thick trunk and three-meter north limb. He had sent the workmen and tree specialist to the ground for an early lunch.

Vik said, "I welcome you, Kiriba. Tell me."

The Messenger stared at the sky. "Message to Masil only in private, from Muwale, Message: Lusaka and Rukwa were taken, tortured and killed by Ndola agents seeking your place of hiding. Many second and third level managers are in prison. Empire agents and officials are in control of the banks and bank holding companies. Lines of ownership and control are being traced. More companies are being taken, daily, by Ndola. Many lower level officers and managers are fleeing. Commerce is wilting and dying more each day. I obey. I obey. Instructions are being followed. Masil-loyal guards and soldiers will filter to you from all areas. Gold comes in supplies for farm. I must hide now, at winery six. Will come to you soon. End. Muwale. End message."

Vik nodded. "Thank you. I have a message for Empress Punia. Her ears only, in private. Message: I am safe and well. You are in danger from Ndola. Go to the winery owned by Sunzu Company at Kenge. My agent, Muwale, will bring you to me. Please obey. Mask your purpose. Do not trust anyone in the palace trees. End. Masil. End message."

Kiriba said, "It'll be difficult to speak to the Empress alone."

"I know. Do your best. I'll pay you triple."

"Ndola had a woman Messenger drugged and questioned for information about you. She died, of course, before speaking. She had no information, no messages, anyway."

"He's desperate. A desperate man becomes a stupid man."

Kiriba nodded. "He's destroying the empire...everything. The Messengers now will not work for the government. No one can kill a Messenger and go unpunished."

"Is that the Guild's decision?"

"Yes. It's automatic. Ndola knew what would happen."

Kiriba hesitated, then said, "I have a hard rumor, Messenger-to-Messenger four times, that Ndola suspects a link between you and Empress Punia. He believes himself duped and shamed for many years."

"Thank you. Any other rumors from the palace trees?"

"No. But the slaves in Kinshasa are becoming very secretive and insolent, especially the white ones. Many are running. Many have had to be killed. The army is spending as much time dealing with slaves as with trying to find you."

"Quebo should have anticipated all that."

"You shamed him terribly in the prison. They still don't know how you escaped."

Vik was mildly surprised. Apparently Consi had lied about where and how she had met him, when she betrayed him that night. Or it could be that this Messenger's information was out of date.

"The king of Malange arrived for a state visit and the dedication of Ndola's tomb on the day you escaped. He left for home two days ago, ignored, humiliated, and very angry."

"He might be an ally."

"The great Masil knows better than anyone where allies are to be found in the provinces, and beyond."

Vik smiled. "Private information for you only, and for Messengers only. As follows: I am attempting to organize a government to replace Ndola as soon as possible. He is insane. His agents are deluded and greedy. I welcome the services of the Messengers. Their danger is now and will be great. I guarantee triple pay for them."

Kiriba said, "I think the common people will support you. I hope you succeed."

"Thank you. Now go down and eat and rest. Your lion is being fed, groomed, and rested. Will you leave at dawn?"

"Yes."

Vik watched the slim Messenger walk back down the tree ramps to the ground. He looked out at the surrounding fields, at the workers harvesting the Tungo shoots.

He shook his head. "If I had any sense..." He knew he should simply get out. Forget the Congo. Go to India and try to resurrect that ancient civilization. This one was collapsing.

But he had to try to save it. If things fell into place...if enough key men still lived...if enough armed men could be gathered...if they had enough time....if Ndola had the terminal sense to die quickly enough.... If Quebo---

Vik made a sound of disgust. Too damn many ifs.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Her name was Dala, and she was fiercely passionate. Her large breasts quaked from her quick breathing and from the smacking jolts of his plunges.

But his mind was occupied with plans...contingencies...

It was near dawn, three days after Kiriba's leaving. A single pink glowleaf faintly illuminated the high bedroom.

Vik had spoken to Deba candidly and gained the man's total loyalty. The farm sheds had been prepared to house many hundreds of men. The kitchens had been readied. The nearby villages had been purchased clean of all extra foodstocks and supplies. The locals had been told the army had decided to use the farm as a barracks for five thousand men.

Dala's kitchen-strong fingers gripped tighter on his flexing buttocks. Her knees drew up higher, wider...She began to grunt and gasp in climax.

Vik turned full attention to his own pleasure. He feasted on her ecstasy-contorted face which enhanced his sensations, his participation, his power.

He had always loved this critical time---the helpless abandon of the girl under him-- His long, deep, hot thrusts.

His awareness of the world, the farm, the room...faded. This was the moment of his greatest vulnerability. His focus was on his engorged loins, the rush of his climax, the exquisite combination of overwhelming sensations....

Vik let himself bellow with rapture. Yes! This was what life was all about! Orgasm, damn it! The incredible pleasure that lured and rewarded everyone.

Then the moment was gone and he knew there was at least one more important thing in the world: money. Wealth.

And another: death. The power to kill. The power to kill was the ultimate power in life.

He rolled onto his back, sweaty and sated, and slid an arm under Dala. He held her warmth and softness close, drinking it with his body. His mind kept toying with the ways of mankind.

The ideal combination was to be a wealthy military dictator with a great capacity for love and sex.

Vik smiled in the pink darkness. He had been that, several times. But his generals had always wanted to use their power too much. The trick was to go with the flow of the invisible tides of the collective unconscious. That way---

A cry floated up to the high tree bedroom from the ground. "Masil!"

He had set out lookouts and patrols in the surrounding lands, and on the paths.

He recognized Deba's voice. He bounded from the living bed --- it sighed as he left---and emerged from the newly grown room onto the narrow porch. "Yes?"

"Armed men are coming from the north. About fifty. They have a supply train and important men on lions."

"Army?"

"No. Many wear the Masil chevron and the Congo Trading Company insignia."

"See to their comfort when they arrive. Send the highest man to me as soon as possible."

When Vik re-entered the bedroom, Dala was slipping on her cotton smock. She had smoothed the bed furs and plumped the pillows. He kissed her and said, "I'll send for you again, soon."

She nodded, smiled, trailed fingers on his naked hip, and left the bedroom.

He heard her descending steps on the ramp as he entered the bathroom to wash. Dala now talked to him as little as possible. She was still awed by his being Masil...and maybe Kun-Zar? He was as grateful for her silences and tact as he was for her honest passion and erotic skills.

He took a purple robe from the alcove and positioned its suckers in his armpits. The dull leafcloth slowly came to life and glowed with royal light.

Vik left the bedroom and walked down the ramp to a larger room ten meters lower in the tree. It had been the former manager's living and diningroom. He had had more chairs suckered into the tree and added a larger, killed-wood conference table.

He heard the contingent of men arrive as he ate breakfast. He rose from the table and crossed to the young, clear membrane window. He saw fat Gulu on the biggest lion. He saw two donkeys carrying only bulging, reinforced saddle bags. That meant gold.

Vik returned to his breakfast. He told the attending Salina to quickly order great quantities of wheat cakes, syrup and eggs. "And sweet wine. At least three bottles."

Gulu was a glutton. Brilliant, cunning, a great talent for business...but traumatized as a child and now, in his early thirties, unable to stop eating.

Vik sipped thick, powerful coffee sweetened with honey and listened to Gulu puff and grunt up the ramps.

The fat man finally entered the room. He was sweating and angry, but when he saw Vik he bowed his head and said, "I have obeyed, great Masil."

"Fine. Sit down and eat. I want a full report."

Salina carried a large platter of food from the small service elevator at the rear wedge-corner of the room.

Vik dismissed her after a moment, made sure she descended to a lower level, and turned to Gulu.

The hugely fat man had learned to talk clearly while eating. He began, "Rukwa was able to burn some record leaves and papers before Ndola's men took the bank. Lusaka was destroying records, too, but the Congo Bank is so big, and there is so much cross-filing and records ... They'll peel their way into knowing all your holdings eventually. Rukwa and Lusaka bought us some time though."

"How many men are coming?"

Gulu shrugged. His flesh shook. At root maybe four thousand, but it will take a month or more to assemble them."

"How much gold?"

"About three hundred thousand in coin. Ndola confiscated millions when he took the banks."

Vik said grimly, "Even if he eats gold it won't keep him alive an extra day."

Gulu grinned and continued eating.

"Who did you bring with you?"

"Quilu, Sandoa and Pangala. Good organizers."

"Do you have contacts in the palace trees? Can we get a private message to Quebo?"

"Maybe."

"I want to tie him up with a deal...a prospective meeting...until he can be assassinated."

"Bunkeya would take his place. Unless Ndola---"

"Reach Bunkeya first. Gold, estates... The usual. Do you know his core?"

"I've heard it's little boys. Gitega has all those files and the operatives in that area. He's on

his way. He has gold and men, too."

"I'm thinking of Punia as a front after Ndola dies. It's about time the empire had an empress. I can stay in the background. You, Gitega, and Muwale will be the high ministers. We can make it work if we're lucky."

Gulu poured more syrup over a fresh stack of cakes. He smiled.

Vik said disgustedly, "You eat too fucking much!"

"I long ago decided to fully enjoy the pleasures of food, knowing the risks. I do not expect to live another ten years in any event. Our venture now -- opposing a terrified, desperate emperor and a cunning minister of defense -- is probably doomed. So I'm eating even more."

"Why doomed?"

"It's a short leaf. No preparation... Bad time and organization dynamics. But I choose to marry your attempt, Masil... or whoever you are---"

"I'm not Kun-Zar! Why would you believe---"

"I'm no fool, Masil! I don't care about your past...or pasts... I'm here for the adventure, for the scheming and the game. I could be in Gabon by now, eating happily at my estate in Kango. But that would be so dull..." He drank wine and poured himself more.

Heavy footsteps approached on the ramp. One man. "Masil?" It was Deba.

Vik went to the door and spoke to him on the ramp. One glance and he knew it was bad news. "What's the problem?"

"Baidoa bribed someone. He's gone."

"Can he be caught?"

Deba shook his head. "He knows this area too well. He knows too many people who will help him."

Vik said, "Thank you. See to your duties..."

Now it was a matter time... and luck. How fast could word get to the palace that Masil was here? How quickly could he accumulate and organize enough fighting men to fight the force Quebo and Ndola would send? He needed time to recruit, to undermine the alliance, to bring in rebellious eastern province soldiers and southern African troops if an "arrangement" could be made with those governments... He needed time for the empire to grind to a halt...before he could save it and put it back together again.

Vik again had the strong impulse to simply walk away.

But he'd tried the hermit life seven or eight times, and each time boredom had driven him back to the action and excitement and danger of human affairs.

He returned to Gulu. "When you're finished eating, have your soldiers set up a professional military patrol and first alert net around the farm and the village."

"I have Quilu doing that now."

"I'm going up to my bedroom for a sleep. When you're finished eating--- temporarily--- call Sandoa and Pangala up here and work out some detailed plans and options with time frames."

"It shall be, Masil."

CHAPTER TWELVE

It was night, seven days later. In Vik's high tree bedroom only a single small glowleaf shed a minimal red light. Empress Punia was too worried to make love. Vik realized that immediately. He shifted position and drew a wool blanket up over them and prepared for another long duel with her fears. He wished she were ten years older, more mature and emotionally tough.

But he had picked her for her body and her sensuality, not her courage and intelligence.

She huddled against him. She guiltily stroked him. "Why did you stop?"

"You're not aroused, and there is no pleasure for me in rubbing my pole in a dry hole."

"I'm sorry. I keep thinking about what you told me this afternoon...and I keep remembering how Ndola had that second Messenger killed. It was so...ugly. All he did was talk to me for a minute. And the army men everywhere in Kinshasa... They're all so frantic. Ndola has had high army people killed -- butchered -- for letting you get away. He's even threatened Quebo. He's insane with pain and with a terrible lust to capture you. It's horrible when he talks about you."

Vik nodded. "When you're ruling Empress, with good advisors, you can change things. Ndola doesn't have much longer to live."

Punia seemed not to have heard. She was self-absorbed, talking to him and to herself. "He's offering ten thousand gold emperors for your capture, now. You must be brought to him alive."

Vik idly caressed her breasts under the blanket. He said wryly, "He steals my money and offers it as a reward for my capture."

"I almost couldn't get away. I had to trick Eyasi and bribe two guards and even then Sese and I almost didn't get out of the city. It was awful."

"You made it. You're safe now."

"He told me you're Kun-Zar. He said he had proof. He said you are immortal!"

"He's a dying man. He believes what he wants to believe. He's so afraid of death he's---"

"I'm afraid of you. I know you're Masil... But you could be Kun-Zar. You've always been so ... young in the loins...and so much in command and sure of yourself and you know so much and your eyes can get so cold...like I'm a bug to you ...like we're all nothing but bugs to you because you've lived forever and you'll keep on living forever..." Seh clung to him fiercely, sobbing.

Vik fought the desire to push her away. He fought contempt and disgust. She was after all barely out of childhood. Out of her depth in every way. He had used her from the beginning, and was planning on using her again, and again...

He took a deep breath and deliberately relaxed. He said, "My darling, I am not Kun-Zar. You mustn't be afraid of me or of the future. Before you arrived here, Gulu and Muwale and I sent couriers and Messengers on the way to all the empire's allies and client states. Even some rivals to the south. We'll soon hear of uprisings and we'll get large numbers of troops from them, to help us bring down Ndola and Quebo, and to place you on the throne."

"But I can't---"

"You'll have me to advise you, and Gitega and Gulu and others. You'll be the greatest empress ever known. You'll wipe out the whites and save the civilized belt. You will be honored by artists and sculptors and writers. Replicas of your beauty will be everywhere in the warm lands."

She continued to cry.

"You'll have anything you want, anytime you want, from anyone."

"Can I have certain people killed? Like Chunya? I hate him!"

"Of course. You can have your teachers disemboweled if you like, and not have to learn anything more ever again." He hadn't realized how immature she really was.

She might be difficult in certain situations. But he had always had to work with flawed tools.

Punia's crying ebbed. She cuddled against him. Her hand teased him. "Is this the pole of a god?"

He chuckled so she could hear. His mind disengaged from the following sexual byplay. His mouth said words she wanted to hear, and his body covered hers, and he entered her...

His greatest danger was the present unfocused, uncontrolled time of gathering forces -- and the next two weeks. There were groups of apparently loyal guards and private army men coming to the area every day now. High people from various of his companies and companies owned by his companies.

Several of them, he was sure, were traitors, or would-be traitors. A few were enemy agents. A few were simply ambitious and greedy. Opportunists. He had spotted a couple and had Gulu assign them unimportant posts and tasks.

Rumors were thick in the camps, in the sheds... He had heard one saying Ndola would pay five thousand gold emperors for Masil's head, and ten thousand for him alive.

But even five thousand was a fortune. And it figured easier to kill Masil than capture him.

In addition, the Kun-Zar stories were spreading, becoming elaborate, bizarre. Some of the high people had managed to bring a few white slaves.

Then there was Quebo. The Defense Minister might secretly order Masil killed instead of captured, now that news of Masil's rallying of forces meant a struggle for the empire. Without Masil/Kun-Zar, the overthrow attempt would collapse. And Quebo would have the throne for the taking. Ndola could be declared imcompetent.

The possibilities and contingencies were like a three-dimensional spider-web of ifs. It was the eternal game, the high risk game that gave life meaning.

Vik's thoughts were penetrated by Punia's panting wails of ecstasy. His driving, tireless loins had given her the high pleasure again... and now he could take his own pleasures. He immersed his consciousness into the rising tide of molten sensations that churned in his belly and loins. He let himself thrust deeper, shuddering her, quaking and rippling the spongebed.

He closed his eyes to more thoroughly enjoy the surging, golden climax. Abruptly -- a ripping sound, the shattering of a fragile gourd, the sudden spreading flare of burning oil-and-pitch.

Punia screamed. Vik recoiled instantly from the flames. The small young room began to fill with acrid smoke. The carpet wilted and blackened.

Vik realized a simple but effective incendiary bomb had ripped through the south window. He pulled Punia from the bed and retreated toward the door.

Another egg-shell gourd, with lighted fuse, ripped through the membrane and splattered on the floor, adding its fuel to the spreading pool of fire.

Vik hesitated, then went for the long, sharp metal knife he had bought from a commander of guards the day before.

Punia squalled with terror and tried to get to the door.

Vik held her. The fire bombs were being lobbed into the room to drive them out through the door. The ramp was the greater danger now. There were other ways out.

A third bomb struck the outside of the room near the torn window. The room began to bake.

Vik quickly hacked an escape hole in the rear wall next to the tree trunk. The fibrous wood was thin and there were no vine tubes or feeders in that section.

Behind them the spongebed began to finally burn, giving off a sickening stench. A small rivulet of fire crept toward them across the dying carpet.

Vik pushed Punia out of the room onto a small access ramp half a meter wide. He placed her hands on safety grips in the rough bark and urged her away, around the bole. He yelled in her ear, "Out three meters, then up the trunk! Look for the insets and footholes!"

She obeyed. She trusted him. He followed, squeezing out through the irregular hole. The huge tree trunk hid their escape from those who had thrown or catapulted the bombs, and from anyone waiting on the ramp by the door.

Below, cries and alarms spread. But both Vik and Punia were naked, black against the black of the tree in the fire-flickering darkness.

He gestured her to a higher ramp on a five meter-thick limb. They edged around until the trunk shielded them from the fire. They were in a pool of darkness.

He motioned her to lie down. He crept out onto a naked branch that dipped slightly from his weight. He could see the ramp outside the door of the burning room, and the man crouched there with a double crossbow cocked for firing.

Vik recognized him: Sumota, a middle-aged Captain in the guard contingent from a jop tree plantation. They had been the third large group to arrive.

The room was clearly now an inferno. The killed-wood door was aflame. The man was settling back on his heels, confident one of the bombs must have hit Masil. The empress was supposed to be in her private room fifty meters lower in the tree.

Vik peered down at the limbs and branches where the fire bombs had to have come from. He couldn't see anyone. There had to have been two men; one to carry the fragile roba gourds full of pitch and oil, and another to carry shielded fire.

There wasn't a gap in the extended limbs, branches and foliage of the huge tree to allow for a catapult of the bombs from the ground. And even if the tree guards had been bribed or killed, a catapult was awkward and difficult to move quickly. It would be very hard to disguise.

So the confederates were by now down the tree, or on the ground, probably joining in the confusion and surge of people up the ramps.

The Captain had to be very sure Masil was dead before throwing the crossbow into the fire.

Vik waited, judging the man. Sumota had served in the army for ten years and was an experienced soldier. He would know all the tricks of combat. But he would be no match in strength.

He watched as Sumota finally threw the crossbow through the weakened furiously burning door. He watched as Sumota pulled a metal knife and hacked a water vine free of its trunk suckers.

When the first of the soldiers and servants pounded up around the final curve of the ramp to the approach to the burning room, Sumota was using the water vine as a fire hose. There wasn't much pressure. Sumota screamed, "Get the pump going! Masil is in there!"

Vik had to admire the assassination plan. He edged his way back

to the platform where he had left Punia. "Stay here for a few more minutes. I'll send your girl up with a robe." Then Vik went down the narrow side ramp to the intersection with the main ramp.

Sumota looked higher than usual and saw him descending.

Vik took a certain satisfaction in the widening of the man's eyes and the shocked realization of failure.

But Sumota was quick and clever. He pointed and yelled, "MASIL LIVES!" As all attention focused on Vik, Sumota moved downramp through the guards and tree servants.

Vik had to remember he was Masil, an aged man with a limp. He bellowed, "STOP SUMOTA! He's an assassin! Don't kill him!"

There was a scuffle on the ramp. A scream, more yelling among some soldiers. A cry as Sumota crashed through the railing and fell.

A sergeant later reported to Vik. "He's dead. His head was split open when he struck a limb on the way down."

And later: "Two men from his unit are missing."

Vik dismissed the soldier. To Gulu he said, "Maybe those two will report me dead rather than admit failure...if they stayed long enough to know for sure."

Gulu smiled and ate a large Xilu grape. "One more maybe. My belly is full of maybes."

Vik grumbled, "Your belly is full of shit."

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT ISSUE

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ALIEN CONCLUSIONS

8-5-78 This is short-hairs time and I'm disgruntled. I've had to cut two pages out of "Other Voices." limit Alter to one page, limit "Small Press Notes" to one page, and if Darrell Schweitzer had gotten his column in before this I wouldn't have room for it. Also in the no-room slot are the two articles I promised for this issue.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE PAGES GONE? Well, the Bova interview ran very long but I found it so good and informative and timely that it was impossible to cut it significantly.

The third segment of ONE IMMORTAL MAN took a large chunk...and both Bill Warren and Elton Elliott ran their columns longer than expected.

NEXT ISSUE? The last, final segment of ONE IMMORTAL MAN will use up fifteen or so pages. Other features will suffer, naturally. Probably only one interview...maybe the Terry Carr. And the Damon Knight article (which will blow minds) has to appear.

Look, if you write a letter for publication, be succinct!

SOME LAST MINUTE NEWS: In spite of all the uproar about the Pocket Books contract in this issue and in LOCUS and among authors and agents, it seems that the slave contract is still being sent to inexperienced authors who (the corporation obviously hopes) will sign it virtually unread and not-understood, or who need the money, or who haven't the guts to make changes or engage in long, back-and-forth dickering on clauses.

Steve Fabian is hard at work on covers and illustrations for Ace and Dell and has had to refuse work for at least a month ahead.

That's great for Steve, but a sadness for us small press publishers.

Trina E. King reports: 'Fred Pohl is taking over the editorship of ANALOG. At least so I have been told on good authority.' 30 July, 1978.

Robert Whitaker writes: 'For Ted Sturgeon fans and completists: Sturgeon has admitted to writing the Ellery Queen novel PLAYER ON THE OTHER SIDE, which was published in 1963. It was published in paperback in 1965 by Ballantine. Currently it is still in print in England as a Gollancz hardcover.

'An unverified rumor has it that Avram Davidson is responsible for one Ellery Queen novel, perhaps two.'

Neil Barron writes: 'Just talked to Delap, who says he has a new job beginning next month but who wasn't very hopeful about resuming DELAP'S P&SP REVIEW. In his format each copy costs $1-$1.25 to produce and mail, and you just can't recover costs with his 800-1000 subscribers.'

From Lee Smith: 'Since you saw fit to publish my note about Ron Goulart's Joseph Silva alter-ego last issue, I thought I might as well follow up with a full list of Goulart's various pen-names:

Frank S. Shawn
Con Steffanson
Kenneth Robeson
Howard Lee
Josephine Kains
Jose Silvera
Rod Gray

Under the Shawn pen-name, he wrote 6 Phantom novels: 4&5, 7&8, and 10&11. Under the Steffanson pen-name, he wrote those sub-Perry Rhodan attrocities in the Flash Gordon series: 1 through 3.

'Under the Robeson pen-name he wrote 12 Avenger novels: 25 thorugh 36. I was astounded to learn this. Kenneth Robeson was a real writer in the 30's who wrote the original Avenger novels. In recent years these have been reissued.

'Under the Lee pen-name, Goulart wrote 2 Kung-Fu novels: 2&3.

'Under the Kains pen-name, he wrote the novel: THE DEVIL MASK MYSTERY.

'Under the Silvera pen-name he wrote a short story: "Confessions."

'Under the Gray pen-name, he wrote 9 Eve Drummer, Lady From Lust novels.

'In addition. Goulart has written numerous short stories under these pen-names:

Max Kerny
Ben Jolson
John Easy
Joseph Silvera.'

8-7-78 Darrell Schweitzer's column arrived today. Short, but it'll still have to wait till next issue. See you all in November.

BACK ISSUES

THE ALIEN CRITIC
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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #17 Interview with George R. R. Martin; Interview with Robert Anton Wilson; "Philip K. Dick: A Parallax View" by Terrence M. Green; "Microcosmos" by R. Faraday Nelson.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #18 Interview with Lester del Rey; Interview with Alan Burt Akers; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; "A Short One for the Boys in the Back Room" by Barry Malzberg.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #19 Interview with Philip K. Dick; Interview with Frank Kelly Freas; "The Notebooks of Mack Sikes" by Larry Niven; "Angel Fear" by Freff; "The Vivisector" by Darrell Schweitzer.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #20 Interviews with Theodore Sturgeon and Joe Haldeman; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; "The Vivisector" by Darrell Schweitzer; "The Gimlet Eye" by John Gustafson.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #21 Interviews with Leigh Brackett & Edmond Hamilton, and with Tim Kirk; "The Dream Quarter" by Barry Malzberg' "Noise Level" by John Brunner.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #22 Interview with John Varley; "S-F and S-E-X" by Sam Merwin, Jr.; "Afterthoughts on Logan's Run" by William F. Nolan; "An Evolution of Consciousness" by Marion Zimmer Bradley."

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #23 Interviews with A. E. Van Vogt, Jack Vance, and Piers Anthony; "The Silverberg That Was" by Robert Silverberg.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #24 Interviews with Bob Shaw, David G. Hartwell and Algis Budrys; "On Being a Bit of a Legend" by Algis Budrys.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #25 Interviews with George Scithers, Poul Anderson and Ursula K. Le Guin; "Flying Saucers and the Stymie Factor" by Ray Palmer; ONE IMMORTAL MAN--Part One.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #26 Interviews with Gordon R. Dickson and Larry Niven; "Noise Level" by John Brunner; "Fee-dom Road" by Richard Henry Klump; "The Middle Earth War Games" by John Boardman.

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